

HUGO HUPPERT

MEN OF SIBERIA

Sketchbook from the Kuzbas



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By

HUGO HUPPERT



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CHAPTER ONE

THE BRIGADE ON THE ROAD

The First Encounter—Siberia Bound—Fellow Travellers, Shock-Workers and “Others”—The Wife of Rostov—Okroshka of the Rotten Teeth—Safar of Baku—Engineer Vogel and the Red Army Commanders

CHAPTER ONE

THE BRIGADE ON THE ROAD

I

It was in winter, in January, the month of snow and wind, in the "third decisive" year, on a little railway station near Tula, that the magnificent scale of the country suddenly crossed my path.

The hills across which we three were tracing tortuous tracks with our skis were strewn with dry snow like the slag at a pithead. On the eastward slopes, where the wind had blown out troughs in the snow, the brown earth of last year lay bare. Long feathery beards hung from the pine branches and the peasant huts were buried so deep you could scarcely see their smoky roofs.

Suddenly the line of black fence cut across our path. Behind it, the railroad track—dark, severe, stretching straight away into the endless distance. From the tiny building of the railway in the desolate snow-covered landscape, you would never have thought that only a few versts to the north-east, on Lake Ivan where the River Don rises, was the beginning of the Bobriki district, a first-class industrial region in the making. Power stations, chemical works. And the pits of the Moscow coal basin.

My two companions were German colliers—I was then working in the Rykov Mine—and on this day's outing we had the surprise of discovering a railway line which led straight from here to the shore of the Pacific, to Vladivostok.

When we first came, we had been brought on sleighs provided by the mine management and had never once bothered to think in what direction the railroad, which we had left at Uslovaya, continued its course. Only now, in the small waiting room full of steam and human beings, where a great oil lamp was already swinging to and fro, lulling the room in a soft yellowish twilight, did we hear the words: Yesterday's train will come in today, twenty-six hours late, because the track was snowed up near Irkutsk.

Irkutsk? Where were we then? Weren't we only a couple of hours by train from Tula? What was all this talk about Irkutsk?

Our skis were leant against the warm tinplate pipes which stretched obliquely across the room to the iron stove. Round the stove lay the waiting passengers beside their sacks, looking like sacks themselves. Outside a whistle blew. And all sprang up and crowded noisily out on to the platform, stamping the fresh snow under their feet.

Hissing and clanging, the train pulled in. Two engines, a long mixed assortment of cars. Freight waggons, passenger cars, all hung with ice, the walls flecked with grey and white from the breath of the winter storms through which the train had been speeding. Wrapped in fur and felt, the passengers hoisted their bundles into the cars with their small, dimly lit windows. The guards waved their lanterns in signal, and the train moved ponderously on its way.

When the red light on the rear car had vanished in the direction of Uslovaya, a man was left behind on the platform with two boxes. A kettle was standing on one of the boxes. The man swung his arms

to warm himself and shouted several times "Ekh-ma, ekh-ma," the sailors' cry. Then he picked up his baggage and went off to see the station master, who simultaneously fulfilled the functions of telegraph operator and booking-office clerk.

We got acquainted with the newcomer. He was called Beryoskin, was a mine efficiency expert by profession and had just come from Prokopyevsk near Kuznetsk, western Siberia. In no uncertain terms he told us of a gigantic mining enterprise that was being started, out there in the inconceivable distance; named quantities and figures which we were acquainted with well enough, but which arrested us for the first time now that the warm breath of a living witness was infused into them.

His moustaches were dripping, particles of ice hung from his eyelashes, streams of water trickled on to the table from his fur cap. And all these things somehow gave point to his narrative, underscored his speech, which he did not know how to make graphic in bare words. His conversation was rather that of a man who is accustomed to think in figures. He belonged to that new, unprecedented race of men whom planned economy has created, who look upon the world with practical socialist eyes—as something which must be changed. The apex, the axis of the earth is the plan. The plan as a whole, the plan in its smallest details. The plan of what is to be. Such was the philosophy of Beryoskin, the steaming efficiency expert. Later on, I met greater ones of his kind, but Beryoskin was the first.

In the quiet that had fallen on the little station, where express trains seldom stopped, every one of his meagre words was like a hint of something

inexpressible, of something that could only be outlined as yet. Thus Beryoskin came to the Rykov Mine and he brought us one moment's contact with Siberia, the fabulous fairyland of a socialist industry that is coming into being. This moment's contact was as minute and at the same time as tremendous as one of those jubilee stamps of the Soviet postal service which portray the map of Eurasia, with the Soviet Union marked in red, on four or five square centimetres of space.

The country was setting about the task of completing the foundation of socialism on one sixth of the hard earth's surface.

2

My thoughts reverted to Beryoskin the efficiency expert—for that meeting was already pigeonholed far away in my memory—on that summer's day when, with knapsack on my back and handbag in hand, I was crossing Kalanchovka Square in Moscow in order to take the train for Siberia myself.

In which continent of the Soviet Union are you now making estimates for coal-getting, good Beryoskin? In what colliery are you now grading the rates of work, giving instructions to the checkers, imposing economy measures on the foreman, "mobilizing the inner resources," advising the "cost accounting" brigades, making the lax bookkeepers acquainted with the iron accounts and balances of rigorous Soviet economy?

You are a soldier of planned industry, one of the inventive brotherhood of those who plan. With that socialist conscientiousness which even in the smallest detail feels itself responsible for the great whole, you calculate the numberless rungs in the ladder

which leads upward to the high aim of the year's plan, and you help the miners to climb up step by step. You and your like are daily and hourly giving the lie to those dismal philosophers who assert that only private profit can completely set free personal initiative. Your passion is the future. And just as surely as the simple magnifying glass becomes a component part of the telescope, through which one can discern new worlds never seen before, so your diligence in socialist routine work is an important part of that mighty impetus which will roll the earth forever out of the morass of capitalism!

The greater Moscow grows, the more narrow do its squares seem. The Kalanchovka is as hot and busy as a bazaar. Three railway stations are located here: the old Nicholas Railway Station, built in the classical style, now renamed the October Station—here you take the train for Leningrad; the stumpy Kazan Station with its towers, designed by a pre-war architect in “barbarian Tatar” style; and finally the Yaroslavl Station, built in the bold late-bourgeois “youth style” of 1906, which looks like an illustration for a symbolist poem from the period of reaction.

Many roads lead to Siberia. The exiles of the tsarist empire were mostly sent off from the Kazan Station. The old main line that runs through Tula can be reached from the Kursk Station. And recently direct express trains have begun to go by the north-eastern route—via Yaroslavl to the Urals and the Far East.

Many roads. And all in motion. Train after train, to the east, the north-east, the south-east. The tracks cross one another in Sverdlovsk, in Chelyabinsk, in Omsk. Trains pass each other, cross each other's

tracks. In the morning hundreds of oil containers flash by on an embankment. A giant watertower looms in the red sunset like a concrete mushroom. In the night—a couple of blows against a ringing piece of metal at some out-of-the-way station, a flash of the lantern, and the sleeping train goes clanging onward over the inconceivable vastness of the steppes. . . .

To Siberia! “The swearing of the soldiers, the curses, the screaming of women, the rattle of chains—all this continual, bewildering, deafening noise filled the station platform and poured into the railway cars. These cars were packed full of prisoners. . . . As soon as the train began to move, a sound of weeping, of complaining, of the cries and wails of the wives, mothers and sisters burst forth as a farewell to the exiles; they believed that the prisoners were going to certain ruin in far-off, unknown Siberia. You could see how those who were left behind eagerly followed the departing train with their eyes, shouted a last goodbye and waved their handkerchiefs. . . .” That is how Shapovalov describes the departure from Moscow in his reminiscences.

That was thirty-five years ago, at a time when the journeyers to Siberia were mainly political and criminal offenders together with their numerous attendants in the form of gendarmes, overseers and inspectors; when it was only seldom that officials, fur traders, gold-seekers and speculators, and still more seldom, a mining engineer or the manager of a mine—probably the representative of a French company—travelled to the deserted banks of the Ob, the Tom or the Yenissei in the tracks of the native gold-seekers. The further east you went,

the greater were the treasures and the chances, the cheaper the labour power and the fewer the competitors; but there was also less security and less comfort. . . .

3

The landmarks in our days of travel bring us to halting places on the edge of Europe. First it is an airplane squadron telling us of an aerodrome nearby; then the tents of a camp where workers for Magnitogorsk are taken on—several of us get out here; then a forest fire in the foothills; then a caravan of camels halted before a silo tower. Slowly the train clanks its way over high mountain bridges, with a sawmill down below and thousands of tree trunks floating on the still surface of a river, whose name none of our fellow travellers knows.

The fellow travellers. They encounter each other on the busy platforms of some small station, before the long building of the barrack, or the two or three dismantled railway cars that lie wheelless on their bellies and act as temporary substitute for the station building (inside is the telegraph office, the little stove and iron bedstead of the omniscient "station-master"). They encounter each other at the "hot springs" on the larger stations, the much frequented hot water tanks, where boiling water comes flowing out of rough cast-iron taps into their pots and kettles; or in the little bazaar nearby, where peasant woman—Bashkirians or Tatars—shimmer in coloured veils, standing shoulder to shoulder behind a trestle table where they offer their wax-like sheep's milk cheese, pickled cucumbers, eggs, roasted chickens and flat maize cakes for sale. They encounter each other again and again, these same fellow travellers—navvies recruited in

White Russia, carpenters from Karelia, Moscow bricklayers and concrete-mixers, the tinker and the assembler from Sormovo. Not to mention the workers' brigade from the Central Council of Trade Unions, which has been commissioned to audit the finances at several points in the Kuznetsk Basin. Very different is the origin of the various travellers, their dialect, way of speaking and the objects of their journey. There are close groups and detached individuals, there are responsible workers on special missions and happy-go-lucky fortune seekers. Some are going to Tagil, others to Berezniki and there are many, many of them bound for Magnitogorsk, for the Magnet Mountain's force of attraction is strong—for some of the travellers it is a saga and nothing more. There are some who journey on with us, over the great Urals water-parting and beyond. And one or two isolated little people are even travelling on account of family affairs, to Tomsk or Tulun. But the great majority—and this is something new, important and characteristic—have some direct professional connection with that great inception which is called the Urals-Kuznetsk Combine (U.K.K.)—although their views and hopes are still more various than their places of destination. "U.K.K."—this the mighty field of plans, wishes and calculations into which these men's thoughts flow. No matter if the weathered board on the outside of the pullman car bears the inscription "Lenin-grad-Vladivostok" or "Riga-Manchuria."

In the evenings, on the hard upper berth—how many nights have you spent on these boards?—it is useless to seek for early sleep. Light, noise and the tension of the trip keep the mind wakeful and alert. Looking down obliquely from above, in the

glare of the electric bulb, you can pierce the inner secrets of these characters. They are of all sorts and kinds. Night lays them bare. As though hypnotized by the monotonous drone of the wheels, men take their neighbours into their confidence. The fateful question of all questionnaires—"What were you before 1917?" does not even need to be asked. Life-stories pour out of their own accord. The long anchor-chain of reminiscences rattles out till it reaches sea bottom, till the narrative is brought down to the present moment and the anchor-chain timorously made fast: "What about food supplies there? Can you get boots, soap, tobacco on the building site?" A middle-aged married couple from Rostov, both of them bookkeepers, are going to Kemerovo and picturing a calm existence, a sort of rural idyll there. "We'll be able to hire a little garden in the great Kuzbas, don't you think? And then chickens, and a cucumber bed..." No one in the car knows about this for certain.

The married couple are on their guard day and night against railway thieves. They are visibly distrustful of their *vis-a-vis*, a "technician" of dubious profession who has told me that he is "offended" because after the dissolution of the old territorial units—the *okrugs*—he has been "degraded" to the post of district worker instead of being advanced, as was fitting, to that of regional functionary. He wants, so he says, to begin again from the start. And with this aim in view he is going to Magnitogorsk. This man—his name, roughly speaking, is Okroshka—has had experiences, he knows the ropes, distributes advice and information in a bored tone. Just now he is instructing two young fellows, who are out to seek bread and adventure, as to how to

get taken into the trade union right away. "Ah, in my day it was harder," he yawns. "If you weren't working, you couldn't get into the union. And if you weren't in the union, you couldn't get any work. In those days, you see, there were unemployed, that's what. . . ." Between whiles he repeats: "Yeah, I've had experiences in my time. . . ." and yawns nasally. I myself begin to think that one had to guard one's bag against Okroshka. And maybe also against that soft silent fellow sitting in the corner with a beard like Jesus who claims he has lost his papers. . . . He looks damn like a kulak's son who is "flitting."

Nonchalant and harmless is the manner of a little Muscovite who gleams with wit and gold teeth as he pours out his acid irony over "the provinces" of Soviet Russia. "Just imagine, when I was sent down to Vyatka last year, the Vyatka-ites all wanted to know where I was from. And when I told them: 'I'm from Moscow, good folks, from old Moscow,' they opened their eyes wide and asked: 'Well, what have they sent you here for then?' Do you understand? *What for* . . . what crime had I committed that I was sent to Vyatka! Ha, ha, these provincials, they're funny, aren't they?"

But the couple from Rostov are not in the mood for laughter. They count their baggage over and over again, and now they want to know if you can get enough textile goods in the Kuzbas—or "manufactured articles," as they call it. Okroshka knows all about it and allays their fears; the open bazaar in Kemerovo is well developed, the weaving trade is flourishing, there's money to be earned there. He names a couple of usurious prices which he has just invented and bares his rotten teeth in a broad

grin, enjoying the consternation of the Rostov couple. Even the two young fellows, still unversed in the ways of the world, are stricken with apprehension.

Who would believe that this complicated string of jolting cars, which whirls through the night of the steppes like a phosphorescent phantom with head bent forward, with clouds of sand swirling in its wake, contains so many shock brigaders, storm workers, auditing brigades? No, in this coiling cable of a train, which for most of its inmates denotes—drum-taps, an attack, the first swing of the hammer, there are many travellers who are really fugitives. For many of them it may well be more important to put the Urals behind their backs than to reach a new construction site.

Gillam-Safar, one of our brigade of six—his seat is in the other half of the car, full of the ceaseless talk of peasants and people from the collective farms—sees the world with the eyes of a young poet. "If you could just hear the way some of them talk!" he told me once. "There are some enemies among them, I tell you—regular enemies." He has to be reminded that socialism is radically re-building not only the country but the people too, their ways of thinking and behaviour, and that wherever people begin to feel their old sinews cracking under the strain of change, disagreeable, even dangerous words are to be heard. Because the process of driving out the old Adam is more painful, far more painful, than the drawing of a tooth.... "In the evening," he tells me, "when they're tired of singing and card-playing and climb into their berths, they cross themselves. In the morning they reek of bad rye whisky. And they can't read or write. They

ask me if there are godless folk among us Mussulmen too—people who don't believe in Mohammed; because the village priest calls all Mussulmen 'unbelievers'.... They say they are navvies. Well, I asked one of them for whom he wanted to build blast furnaces. 'For my cow,' he said simply. 'I can dig and shovel,' said he, 'and I'm going to see how long a fellow with my muscles needs to grub his two or three hundred rubles out of the earth on the construction job. And then? Why then, of course, I'm going home to my village to buy myself the cow....' And others have half a score of children. On the farm they look askance at the idle greedy little brats, and the wife gives her husband no peace. 'Go on, see what you can earn on the construction job, and come back in the spring with a nice pile of money....' And are these folks to become the staunch cadres of our industry? They always desert just when the season is properly beginning!"

Still and all, I think to myself as I lie stretched out in my berth, these two or three years have taught us that the old *muzhik* is no more. He comes to the construction job again and again. And one fine day he brings his wife and children with him and—stays! Besides that, when his village has been collectivized and labour power has been released thanks to the tractor and the threshing machine, then he and hundreds of his fellows return to industry as delegates from their collective farm. The barriers between town and country are tottering in decay. Moreover there is a magnetic power in the life and tempo of socialist industry. Competition gets into a man's blood and refuses to let him slip back into the old rut.... It's another question when

it comes to the idlers and loafers, the Okroshkas. Such men will often have to whet their blunt minds on the grindstones of hard experience. Anyone who hopes to get away with a pocketful of money, a suit of working clothes and a pair of working boots and then quietly quit the job, is reckoning without the host. For the host is the proletariat and it has learned how to manage its house. It demands discipline of itself. The class enemy today is to be found in the loafer, the wage-hog, the hooligan. And he is in you too, Okroshka, you may be sure of that, and he will be "liquidated as a class," no matter whether this conflicts with your "experiences" or not!

Once again I hear the dulcet tones of the wife of Rostov (turning to her neighbour, a very young worker's wife): "Then you must take some boiled sheep's milk and grate the orange peel.... But oh, dear me! What am I talking about, forgive me, where can you possibly get the milk and the oranges!" The worker's wife evidently does not like this style of talk. Nor do I. No, this book-keeping couple won't stick it out in the Kuzbas, certainly not! She can't live a year and a half in a barrack without her own kitchen garden. And in six month's time her husband will ask to be released from his job on account of piles or boils.... "We're the land without unemployment, my dear—don't forget that—and anyone who has some sense in his head—and you've some in yours after all—can always find something to suit him...."

In the other half of the car the workers, in muted chorus, are humming the wonderful song of the Red partisans.

The guard on duty, seated in his cabin, has put the

lamp on the windowsill. He is cutting bacon into small pieces and shoving them into his mouth on hunks of bread. The monstrous shadow of his chewing jaws sprawls over the two walls of his cabin.

4

Safar, our Tyurkic friend from Baku, has luck with women. He is reckoned handsome. He may be a little short in stature, but his head is strikingly beautiful. Coal-black locks, curling slightly; the liquid glistening eyes—two shady pools in the young sunburnt face; the pronounced aquiline nose—the swoop of a hawk's downward flight from the clouds (this is how a young poetess from his native city portrayed him in a dedicatory poem). And the engineer's wife, who is on the way to join her husband and with whom Safar spent two hours in the corridor last night standing at the open window and feeling the influence of the starlight, has such a bad cold this morning that Safar had to spend the whole day rocking her baby. Finally, he took refuge in the dining car. And there I found him in the susceptible company of a Bashkirian girl student, who understands his native language. Evidently Tyurkic is a language with which you can easily bum your way from Kazan to the Ganges. The twenty-three year old Bashkirian is studying metallurgy and is now on the way to her first job. Women engineers first made their appearance in Soviet metallurgy in large numbers in 1930 when they had all the prejudices of the old managers and of some of the workers against them. Today women metallurgists can already be counted by the hundred, and they have honourably won their place at

the blast furnace and in the foundry and rolling mill.

Safar introduces me to the Bashkirian girl. "Oh, you're a German too, are you?" she asks me. "Have you met the four German technicians? One of them paid court to me like a regular cavalier. The tall one in the leather cap. And he sang me a couple of the latest songs from Germany—of course I didn't understand a word, but the other three laughed so offensively while he was singing. He wrote me a poem as a souvenir; can't you translate it for me?" I read the words, written in twirling *Kurrentschrift*:

"Give me Russia, China or the Argentine—
So long as the girl has a slender line,
Every country's the same to me;
I'm an internationalist, you see.

Beautiful Russian *Fräulein*, don't forget me!
Perhaps we shall have a sweet reunion!
Your Edward B."

I had to laugh out loud. I remembered a short political talk with Edward, the tall mechanic. His music then was in the same key. "To hell with politics," said he with decision. "I don't give a damn if it's Russia or the Argentine or any other place. I set up my revolving pump and that's all there is to it."

This German quartette, four technicians who have been sent by their Düsseldorf firm to Berezniki in the Urals to install steam turbines, presses and revolving pumps, got out in the night to change trains. Their places have been taken by three Red

Army commanders who will probably not be leaving the train till they reach the Manchurian border. The oldest of them, a man of forty years, whom you can recognize as a battalion commander only by the red rhomboids on his coat collar, comes clattering down the corridor at four o'clock in the afternoon with an empty kettle in his hand and asks the guard for hot water. One of the workers in the next compartment hands him his own teapot full of tea and the commander without more ado invites the man and his two comrades to join him in his compartment. There the steam of tea is soon mingled with the smoke of good cigarettes. The workers are eager to hear about the strategical meaning of the Japanese operations in Manchuria and to get a definite idea of the intervention danger. Then they begin to sing. First one of the workers strikes up, singing softly, as though to himself. Soon the others join in, and now half a car is singing in chorus. They sing the incomparable songs of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army....

Engineer Vogel, the sole German specialist who remains in our train after the departure of the four technicians, nods in wonderment: "There's something in that song, you know, upon my word there is. When has the world seen a battalion commander singing and drinking tea with working men? In any other country it would be scandalous, I should say."

Engineer Vogel said today: "Do you know, the most splendid thing—what impresses me professionally, so to speak—is this planned economy. The world, if it is sensible, can really be won over to that.... But look here, why have they got to use all these complicated catchwords? Ah, if you'd

only preach revolution as a bit of rationalization, then you'd be understood. Make it clear to people that communism comes cheaper than capitalism, and cut out all this drivel about the class struggle and so forth!"

"For whom is communism cheaper?" I asked him.

"For whom? For mankind, of course. . . . For all!"

"If you are good at figures, you will find that there is a—let us say, a category of people for whom communism does not pay."

"You mean the Deterdings and Rockefellers. . . ."

"And the Hugenberges and also the MacDonalds and Paul Boncours and Severings, and the ten thousand others who reap the profits in all countries. For them, a world war pays better."

"That would get us back to the class idea again," sighed Vogel, wiping his spectacles.

"Yes, that's where we'd be, my dear engineer."

He shook his head angrily: "The world is crazy."

"Out of joint? We've got to put it right," as Hamlet said.

CHAPTER TWO

TALES ON THE JOURNEY

*In the Shadow of Two Giants—Water Melons and
Travellers' Tales—Safar's Story—How a Shepherd
Boy Joined the Reds—My Story—Malaria and
Evil Spirits in Kazakstan—
"Time's on the March!"*

CHAPTER TWO

TALES ON THE JOURNEY

I

The woody Urals region was passed. Perm, Sverdlovsk, Tyumen lay behind us. Three big rivers—the Volga, the Kama, the Tobol—had been crossed. We put our watches forward three hours. Our car had long lost the fresh turpentine odour it had in Moscow; without and within it was covered with a grey film, all objects alike were drenched in dust. Both the passengers on the hard wooden benches and those on the cushioned seats felt equally smoked and jaded. Twice the axles had become heated, and while the repair gang cooled the bearings with oil and steaming tow, we gladly stretched our legs, tramping through the beautiful blue-green steppe grass, explored a ditch and “botanized” some vetch, caraway, leaks and lettuces; a couple of girls ventured quite a long way out into the countryside, and we all came back with flowers in our hands and a new impression of the landscape. When you shut your eyes, everything was jumbled together—woods, sunrises, pine-trees, birches, the long pull up through the echoing forest, the little mountain lake between the tree trunks, a village—clay cottages, rush-thatched huts—the windmills, and, solitary in the hour-long empty space, the Tebiskaya Lake from whose shore smoke rose up and whose waves dashed like those of a minor Baikal. In the night time the woodland steppe was chilly. After it, the soil grew

more and more sandy; then salt marshes, pale as a pool of moonlight.

Again and again, over long stretches of the track, we passed the canvas camps of an army of spade-workers. The rich black soil was being dug up and hollowed out. The earth was piled up, the embankment widened, rails laid on sleepers. The train slackened its pace, like a curious passer-by who wants to get a better look at what is happening. The rubble is cut out of the ground in huge square blocks and carted up an inclined way on to the embankment in two-wheeled horse-trucks. A second track is being laid, in some places a third. The Trans-Siberian Railway, which was finished just before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War after thirteen years of work, cost the tsarist exchequer six hundred million rubles, but after its "completion" it had to be re-built immediately, since the quality of the work showed that the private building firms and contractors had been more interested in their own profits than in the good of the fatherland. And this strategic main line of tsarist dreams, the backbone of old Russian imperialism in the Far East, this railway that was built twice and had to be paid for twice—remained a single-track railway over a length of several thousand kilometres!

And *this* was to be the main artery of the Urals-Kuznetsk Combine! A tough problem. The "U.K.K." is already born, its broad breast breathing. Its metabolic processes, its elementary blood circulation has begun. On the double-track points we overtake long trains of ore, meet long trains of coal. Chains of squat red and black waggons. Ore this way, coal that. Such is the industrial pulse-beat of the Urals-Kuznetsk organism. The Kuzbas receives ore from

the Urals and sends back coal to the Urals in the same cars. The will of the proletariat unites Urals ore and Kuzbas coal—over an intervening space of two thousand kilometres—by a transport chain of unprecedented power. Every year four million tons of coal (plus 750,000 tons of coke) and three million tons of iron ore will roll on these rails over steppe, river and moorland. Thirty, forty, finally—in 1938—fifty trains a day. Chains of squat red and black waggons. Their tireless pendulum swing—two thousand kilometres!—to and fro between two giants, between Magnitostroy and Kuznetskstroy. And the giants are growing. They are now exchanging cement, cross-beams, bricks, helping each other with supplies of posts, boards, sleepers, timber. At every station there are dumps under a military guard—building materials!

“Not half enough, not half,” says Abchuk—he is another member of our brigade. And you cannot decide offhand if he means the passing waggons with their iron pipes or the piles of building timber at the side of the track. Probably both, and much more besides. For everything is overshadowed by the growing giants. . . .

2

When you travel four days and four nights, mostly through flat country, in the close companionship of a railway car, you tell each other stories. Our brigade of six, representing five nations, is split up amid the labyrinth of the overpopulated train. We meet in the dining car or go to visit our comrades in their compartments. The two lyrical Ukrainians have an accordion between them. But Safar, of

more epic nature, in the late blue-green afternoon of the fourth day of our journey, arranges a round of adventure stories. We are writers. While a couple of watermelons are passed around, each one is to give the company an episode out of his own life in the form of a tale. The melons taste like syrup-water and Safar notifies us warningly that stories may be juicy but not watermelony. He offers to lead off himself. For my part, I choose a page from the margin of my first trip to Asia (1928) which is given here in abridged form side by side with Safar's tale.

And so now Safar has the floor; while he speaks, his eyes are almost closed (as though some delicate photographic plate that fears the light were being carefully developed in the "shady depths"):

"My father was a potter. With his naked feet he drove the stone treadles, with his naked hands he formed dishes, bowls, oil-jugs out of the wet clay. We lived in a wretched hut near Nardaran on the Apsheron peninsula. It was a dreary stretch of lowland; all day long the wind carried the choking odour of oil to our door. I was happy when uncle took me with him to his home in Daghestan.

"My uncle lived in an *aul** not far from the mountain fortress of Gunib. His name was Abdul-Isai, he was a *rayat* or poor peasant. He cared for me like a dear son. He taught me to read and write. He taught me to climb mountains and to feel freedom, he guided me to lofty peaks from which the silver ranges of the Caucasus were opened to our view. In the mountains you are safe, he said. That is right, that is how you feel there. You stand high up on the mountain slopes, and to your ears

* Village.

ascends the babble of streams, winding unseen through the blue depths of wooded gorges....

"During the war years I heard of my father's death. When the Turkish troops had retreated, I got a lift on a market cart and made my way home. I was eleven years old. Nobody recognized me. My elder brother, a worker in the oilfields, had been deported from Baku by the English. So I tramped back on foot to Daghestan and wept youthful tears of joy when I saw again my mountain gorges and buffalo carts. In the mountain villages there was stark poverty, in the valleys the *begs** ruled. Strangers opened the door when I knocked at my uncle's hut. Abdul-Isai, so they said, had been seized by robbers and impaled on a split shaft. I went sadly away down the hill through the woods and hired myself out as stable-boy, donkey-driver and shepherd to a rich wine-grower of that neighbourhood who bore the nickname of 'Kulluk the Limper'—in his youth he had had an unlucky fall from a horse.

"I had only a vague idea of the changes that were going on in the whole country. But when I saw that in our *aul* things had mostly stayed as they were before, I made no bones about performing my hard and almost unpaid work. For a long time I mourned for my uncle, to whom I owe the best years of my childhood, and I wondered: Robbers? There was not much to rob at Abdul-Isai's. But Kulluk pointed with his crutch to the poor villages which clung to the mountain side like swallows' nests: 'That's where the vultures and jackals of the country live!' I wondered still more at that.

* Rich farmers.

Did I not know that each month these hungry villages had to pay interest to the rich Kulluk in heavy jars of honey, milk and great cheeses!

"It was after the second shearing, one cloudy day on the mountain pasture, when the freezing sheep were surprised by a sudden thunderstorm and a shower of hail. The two armed shepherds had gone down to the gorge to fetch water, or had gone off hunting as they often did, and I had to drive the herd down to the pen myself. It was too far to go to the farmsteads. In a sunken lane I suddenly came face to face with a lot of strange men. 'You work for the *beg* Kulluk?' 'I'm his herdsman,' I said. 'Do you know that the limping dog plunders the *rayats*?' 'He is my master whose bread I eat.' 'Maybe he shares his booty with you, eh?' shouted one, and they threw themselves upon me, bound me hand and foot. They slaughtered two of my best sheep, smeared the blood on my face and feasted till late in the night.

"Towards morning—I was half dead with cold and hunger—they undid my bonds, washed me and set me down by the fire, gave me wine to drink and the remains of their meal to eat. 'You're young and stupid,' said they, and questioned me about my father and brothers. When they heard my uncle had lived in these mountains and that he was the *rayat* Abdul-Isai, they were mightily astonished, and the eldest of them exclaimed: "If your words are true, you are the foster-son of our brother!" Then I told them everything I knew about my uncle's life and the manner in which he died. They laughed grimly. Didn't I know, then, who had hired his murderers? No other than Kulluk, the limping dog! A couple of skinsful of wine and a fistful of money

—and the hired gangs of Circassians had finished off all the heads of Committees of the Poor round about Kulluk's vineyards.

"I sprang up like one who catches sight of a viper in his bed. These men were not lying. I knew, too, that when I came back he would break his crutch across my back. I didn't want to remain 'young and stupid' any more. I stayed with the guerilla fighters. Their leader was a rebel on the run, a railwayman from Derbent. We went up into the mountains. We backed up the peasant partisans and the Committees of the Poor in the *auls*. We waged war against the *begs*. And against the whiteguards. Three times we took vengeance on Kulluk. First we took away his riding horses. Then we destroyed his vinepresses.



And it was no mere act of blood-vengeance when we finally burnt him in his own house. Then came the hour when the Red Army swept Denikin out of the country. My friends the guerilla fighters dispersed. Their task was accomplished. I made my way to Petrovsk, to Makhach-Kala, and went to sea. As a sailor I joined the Komsomol."*

Here Safar concluded his tale, and after a few words had been exchanged, it was my turn.

"It was in the year before the Great Plan. With some friends, whom the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in Moscow had brought together, I was making a journey through Central Asia.

"One fine day, leaving Lake Aral, where the fishes were leaping in the sunrise, we turned our horses' heads eastward, giving them eight versts the hour. Late summer. No break in the hot weather, though September was nearly out. By eight o'clock the steppe was already ablaze with heat, the sky seemed to wilt along its pale horizons, the air hung heavy and trembling over the dry watercourses where great tortoises lay in their thirst as still as stones. The bare loess soil, cracked and seamed, was trodden to powder under our horses' hoofs, leaving a sluggish cloud of dust coiling behind us. Soon the soil began to change to the immemorial salty sand of the Kara-Kum Desert, whose sands extend in strips to the north and west.

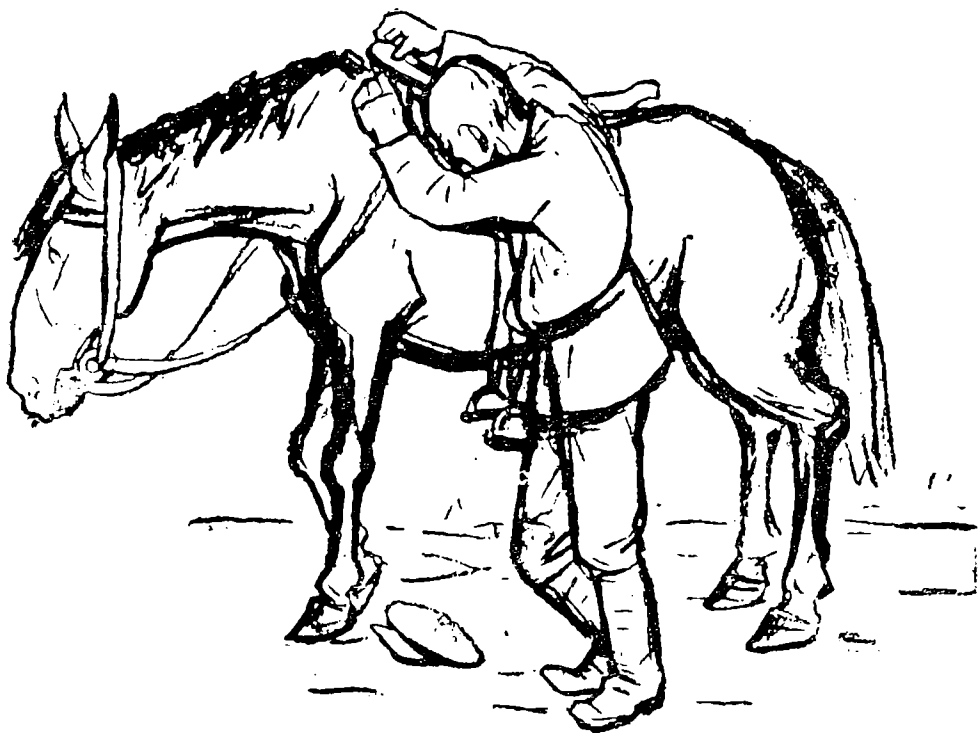
"Towards midday a troop of some fifteen camels appeared, the leader of the caravan riding ahead on his mule. Kirghizian drivers in conical leather caps sat in couples on the first and last camels. Bundles of knotty *saksual*** roots hung down from

* Young Communist League.

** A plant of the Gobi Desert.

the wooden pack-saddles, together with sacks of rock salt and charcoal from Bir-Bil. Our leader turned his horse and exchanged greetings. The long striding camels' legs merged together in unison like a crooked piece of lattice-work, and calmly, almost noiselessly bore the procession across the scene. Their heads bobbed for a moment on the horizon and then....

"Silence settles down on the desert, pressing like the weight of waters at the sea-bottom. Wormwood grass rustles like dried seaweed, bare stems of salt-weed shiver with a glassy tinkle. Tamarisk shrubs with their ramifying roots scoop some particles of moisture from the depth of the soil. Everything—shrubs, rushes and grass—poor, stubby, scaly, prickly. Here and there, like prehistoric grave-



mounds, stand solitary sand-dunes—*barkhans*—fringed with reeds. Nothing more save sand and salt. In the afternoon we watch the grey steppe hawks at play. Swooping down almost to the ground, their wings furred like pointed sails, they come darting towards each other, just avoiding collision by shooting upward in a steep parabola at the last instant and then circling around each other with raucous cries. The wood-larks scatter before them....

“With a light sigh, as though stunned by the torrid vapour, Konrad R. slides down from the saddle and leans limply in the shadow of his horse. We know the symptom; in two or three hours an attack of his sickness will have taken hold of him with full force. Malaria. We have foreseen it. He nods. Apathetically he doses himself with quinine and tea. We halt for a rest at the foot of a *barkhan* and make a fire. Before the cool of the evening I must get the sick man to the next Kazak kishlyak*, where the guide and the other five comrades will catch us up by night.... We gallop on ahead. The heat is abating, Konrad bears up well, riding strongly. In two hours we have reached a nomad tent. Thin smoke rises from the opening in the crest of the tent.

“On one side a man is emptying his bladder. His wife is herding the sheep together with shrill cries.... Behind our backs the sun has sunk to the skyline, the air is cool, blue-grey like smoke. Our shadows hasten on before us, far ahead....

“We sat on felt blankets in the gloom of the tent, while the Kazak, who seemed well-to-do rather than poor, mingled his hospitality with a certain mis-

* Village.

trustful curiosity. He hinted to us that soon—when the moon was full—he intended to break camp; he pointed to the entrance—that meant, southward. The pasture here was poor and his neighbour's greedy herds too many. His wife would fold up the tent, he would strap the children on his camel's back, and then they would go off to seek for a winter pasture, somewhere on the upper Syr-Darya. Our host took canister tobacco, black bread and smoked fish out of a chest. From the back leg of a lambskin his wife shook out the *kumiss*, thick sour mare's milk, into dirty wooden cups. Taking a brass bowl—somewhat cleaner than the cups—she filled it with dusty maize and placed it on a low altar-table which, dedicated to the deity Bur-Khan, stood before the raised shrine, overhung by a regular canopy of wool trimmings and tufts of horse-hair. Through the hole in the top of the tent the stars gazed down upon the sunken fireplace, where a fire of camel-dung was smouldering. Our shadows flickered phantom-like over walls and floor, covered with rushes and felt and many-coloured carpets.

"I rose from my place of honour by the hearth. Konrad, flushed with fever, had pleaded extreme fatigue and lain down to sleep in a dark corner. I put some cushions under his head and stretched myself out on a mat. Our host came in. He had been feeding the dogs and had let them loose again—the herd was left to spend the night in the open. Soon his snoring rose above the flapping of the dying fire and the heavy breathing of his three boys....

"Then, poor Konrad begins to rave in delirium. At first he allows himself to be calmed, but soon his babbling murmur breaks into confused outcries.

He rages and bellows. Our hosts spring to their feet in deathly terror and stand staring at the raving stranger. The children, too, gaze out in horror from under their father's long night-gown, while the latter assails me with a mixture of Russian and Kirghizian—imploring, exorcising, threatening. My explanations are of no avail. There can be no room for doubt; to his mind sickness is the same as madness. We have brought the evil spirit into his house. And while Konrad loudly discourses in strange tongues (the Kazak evidently recognizes the angry accents of Bar-Khan in his broad Saxon dialect) the dogs suddenly set up a barking outside. It is not the first night in late summer that they have signalled the first approach of the Kara-Kum wolves, but this time their baying acquires an idolatrous significance. Our Kazak, like one possessed, tears down from the wall a couple of shield-like boards with hideous demon faces painted on them and dashes out into the night, dragging his family with him.

“With weird eerie cries they surround the tent, beating the boards against their lips. I am taking no chances, and cock my pistol, ready to fire if need be. Outside it is like hell broken loose. The howling of the men vies with that of the dogs, the howling of the dogs with that of the wolves. The father's guttural trumpeting suggests the mad whinneys of a lunatic asylum. Above the bleating notes of the three boys the mother's piercing voice quavers like the strains of a flageolet. It is a sharp wedge of sound driven into the marrow-bones of silence. The calm acoustics of the steppe night have been shattered into fragments. And in the midst of the ear-splitting din, the incredible happens—Konrad sinks into a peaceful sleep! The attack is over.

"Not until after daybreak did our hosts venture back into their enchanted tent. They had wanted to fetch the sorcerer from the neighbouring kishlyak, but it so happened that the sorcerer had gone off to Ksyl-Orda to buy a drumskin.... Our little caravan soon arrived, tired out and wanting sleep badly. And what do you think? From a distance of five or six versts they had heard the exorcising pandemonium and not known what to make of it. But the Kirghizian guide, himself familiar with the ways of ghosts, was thunderstruck with fear and refused to go further. When they insisted—it was chilly and the sky was overclouding—he resorted to cunning and imperceptibly guided his weary companions round in a circle. When they finally crossed their own tracks, the sun was just rising over the steppe....

"That same day we held a well-attended meeting in the kishlyak for sanitary and anti-religious propaganda. We demonstrated the causes of malaria and typhoid fever, how to guard against them and cure them, the dangers of mosquitoes, lice, uncleanness. Towards evening we continued our journey.

"My story, in a sense, is out of date. It happened only yesterday. But between yesterday and today Kazakhstan has had collectivization. A tremendous piece of history. Kazakhstan has begun to clean out its lice, mosquitoes and sorcerers once and for all. And today the Kazak of the cotton-growing or corn-growing collective farm can say the same as a comrade from Ksyl-Orda who has written to me: 'My cradle was in a nomad tent. And the tent was in the deserts of antiquity. My parents were nomads. They had to rove far, for their time stood still. They roved much and saw much. I stay at home and see

more. For time at last has broken camp, my time is on the march!" "

3

"Quite right, time's on the march," said Abchuk jokingly, and put his watch forward another hour. We had left the Omsk region and entered that of Novosibirsk.

The train was crossing a wide-arched steel bridge over the western river into the town.

CHAPTER THREE

NOVOSIBIRSK—NEW SIBERIA

*Drozhkies or Railways?—The Chicago of Siberia—
“Children’s Shoes Have to be Mended”—How They
Built the Bridge—Thirteen Machines an
Hour—We Meet to Hear a Story*

CHAPTER THREE

NOVOSIBIRSK—NEW SIBERIA

I

The cities of Siberia are young—of tertiary strata, so to speak. They trace their origin to the time of the Cossack conquests. The oldest of them, Tomsk, was founded in the beginning of the seventeenth century, Krassnoyarsk is younger by a quarter of a century, Irkutsk by half a century, Omsk by a whole hundred years. But even in the days of the old German explorer, Johann Gmelin, who traversed the whole country from 1733 to 1743, and afterwards, in Göttingen, published an erudite and entertaining book in four thick volumes with numerous maps and copperplate engravings—a book which thus represents more or less the first scientific work on Siberia—even in old Gmelin's time, the "towns" which he names were little more than fortified winter camps, jails, wooden Kremlins, with a sprinkling of traders and merchants.

During the nineteenth century culture was brought to Siberia by generations of political exiles—from the Decembrists to the Bolsheviks—while the merchants plied their trade there. Intellect streamed into the country, while money trickled into it. Tomsk became a considerable cultural centre as a university town and home of the arts. But, sad to say, the history of the town was not made by its philologists and philosophers, nor by its students and actors either, but by—its cab-horses and cart-

horses. Or, to speak more correctly, not the horses, but their owners. For when the Trans-Siberian Railway was being planned, the guild of the rich Tomskian transport owners contrived to see to it that the line did not cut across *their* sphere of interests. And so the railway line actually did leave Tomsk 88 kilometres to its left, and these 88 kilometres, which put money into the pockets of the transport owners, spelled death to the hegemony of Tomsk. The town shut itself off more and more in an austere oasis of cultured seclusion. It was left behind. By the end of the century it had already surrendered the civic crown to its rival, the town which now bears the name of Novosibirsk.

This Novosibirsk is the youngest of the young cities, the Chicago of Siberia. The railway was the deciding factor. It spelled the downfall of Tomsk and put Novosibirsk on its feet—in fact, created it.

In 1893, on the marshy heath on the right bank of the Ob, opposite the Beraba steppe, a corps of railway and bridge building technicians established their headquarters. Blockhouses and sheds for the building materials were put up. The construction workers cut down the woods round about, fished out of the River Ob the wood for sleepers that was floated down to them from the south, set up saw-mills and smithies. A nameless railwaymen's settlement sprang up overnight; it at once attracted a swarm of minor traders and a dozen major ones, and was duly christened, according to the name of the reigning tsar, first Alexandrovsk and then Novo-Nikolayevsk (the town retained the latter name up to 1926).

Since the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway the river shipping on the Ob, Siberia's largest

river, has increased thirty times over. The crossing-point, place of exchange, bridge-head and future railway junction became at one stroke the main sinew of the country. In 1921, after the rout of Kolchak's armies, the Siberian Revolutionary Committee entrenched itself here. Today the general staff of Siberia's socialist heavy industry and agriculture is located here in mighty office buildings of severe and clear-cut architectural style—the Kuzbas Mines Administration, the Siberian Railway Construction Trust, the City Building Trust, the Siberian State Farm Administration, and side by side with them the Regional Trade Union Council, the Chamber of State Trade, the Industrial Bank and so on.

Novosibirsk is the world's youngest big city. Forty years is an infantile age for a town. As the population has already shot up above the first quarter-million mark, new stories are busily being built on to the old houses. This means planting new, airy, well-lit buildings upon the old, stumpy, thickset houses. It is like the young bright shoots of green pine budding on the old dark trunk.

In the smooth rise and fall of the elevators, in the ceaseless buzz of the automatic telephones, you can sense a big city coming into being. It is not simply that there are automobiles, buses, boulevards, here the Red Avenue, there the Stalin Avenue, the "Workers' Palace," the City Opera, the "Alhambra" Open-Air Theatre—all this is not enough. It is in the tempo, the tone of the place that you can hear unmistakably the symphony of a big city.

True, the granite centre of this city is like an island in a great ocean of ramshackle suburbs built of clay and wood, which, with their backyards and pigsties, their kitchen gardens, their flower pots

on the window sill and their washing hung up to dry on the garden fence, is an exact replica of the tumbledown provincial suburbs of European Russia (incidentally the same type prevails from Minsk to Khabarovsk). Here and there you may see the pretty villa of a former government official or the "private residence" of a merchant, set in green. The green is no longer green, the front garden is blocked up with scaffolding, heaps of sand, wooden sheds, piles of bricks; towering above the delicate, almost aristocratic little house, overshadowing it, swallowing it up, rises the giant, cyclopean new building which is to supersede it. And so Novosibirsk is growing—building on this house, finishing that one, extending superannuated family residences, the ludicrous little "hat-box" houses of the 'nineties being put right out of the picture by the giant new buildings. New towns cannot spring up overnight and the shortage of building materials (for the giant babies of industry are insatiable!) even delays the completion of apartment houses that have been started; so organizations in need of premises often resort to buying up those small houses and huts in the suburbs which are no longer fit to live in—much less to use as offices! Then one day begins the work of renovating and repairing, the rebuilding from within, and finally the whole of the old hulk ends its days as the entrance hall to a new building. So it happens that in buildings of the style and dimensions of the concrete era you will suddenly be surprised to find yourself face to face with an antiquity from the wood and stone age of the 'nineties; here a delicately carved door, there a warped wooden staircase, there a floor paved with well-worn sandstone tiles.

Just as we were paying a visit to the secretary of the city soviet, we found the head of a consumers' co-operative sitting with him and fighting desperately for permission to buy up an old, one-story family house (the usual wooden building, plastered with stucco) with a view to opening a small store for food, petroleum and textile goods in it. The price was absurdly low—only 8,000 rubles.

"No, comrade," said the prudent secretary, "the repairs you will have to make in that house amount to a rebuilding and will cost another 7,000 rubles. That makes 15,000 and for that sum you can get building materials for a nice little store. As for the house, we're going to give it to the post-office; they were asking about it yesterday, and they can use it without making any big changes. They'll just knock a couple of holes in the wall for office windows and fix up the telegraph in the kitchen. . . . Please don't laugh"—he turned to us almost severely—"children's shoes have to be mended and soled till the children have grown out of them."

Novosibirsk indeed is still in its children's shoes. But it has nevertheless torn up kilometres of street before our eyes to lay down a drainage system, paved other streets with granite and squares with smooth asphalt, piled up mountains of clinker, shingle and gravel on the still unlevelled places, rolled up barrels of cement, heaped up piles of boards.

The stamp of a new and competent architecture has been set on the centre of the city. Not everywhere, it is true, has competence had the last word. When something new is aimed at, the result is sometimes wide of the mark. Above all the Palace of Culture, or House of Lenin as it is also called, seems

a misfit. Imagine a rectangular cube of stone, looking like the Lenin Institute in Moscow with the Lenin Mausoleum on top of it. A piece of symbolism, well-meant perhaps, but quite inadmissible. Institute and tomb in their original Moscow setting are in place, full of meaning, of a power that defies repetition. But this attempt at architectonic allusiveness impresses one like a poor decoration. "That's not architecture, it's a misunderstanding," one of our brigade remarked quite rightly. And this should not be so. The cow tanking up there in a side street, the occasional pigs nosing around the boulevard—these have their place here for a little longer, they are permissible phenomena of a transition period. But this theatre-like decoration, an offence to the visage of the socialist city, stands anchored fast in the earth; it will not vanish as soon as the cows and pigs—and that is a pity.

The weather being fine, we go for a walk, all six of us. Then we break up into twos and threes like a patrol, so as to reconnoitre the town from as many sides as possible. In the streets we meet a surprising number of hunters with hunting dogs, and there is also a fair amount of hunting equipment in the shop windows. The air smells first of asphalt plus petrol, then—when the tall buildings have been left behind—of coal smoke plus leaven, and so on.

Safar's enthusiasm is mounting high; on his lips is a stereotyped question which he unfailingly asks before the door of every house, cinema or co-operative store which appears better than the average: "That wasn't built before the revolution, was it?" And when, as he generally does, he receives the answer no, he triumphantly enters the fact in his notebook. (From force of habit he still writes in the

old Arabian script, although he carries on enthusiastic agitation for the adoption of the Latin alphabet in all written languages of Soviet Asia.)

The houses begin to thin out as you descend towards the Ob; there are many gardens, and the crowing of cocks. In the background, a graveyard with cherry trees in bloom, dismally reminiscent of home, enclosed by a wall of loosely laid stones. Behind it, the railway embankment, curving towards the bridge. The passenger train, which comes speeding along it as softly as though it were on rubber tyres, suddenly begins to rattle and thunder as it reaches the bridge. The last buildings overhang the steep slope above the river; there are stables and cowsheds of the Nizhni-Novgorod type, tarred barques lying bottom upwards in the grass, and the smell here is tar plus fish oil. Hundreds of washerwomen occupy the pebbly beach, leaving the fishermen no place to angle.

The eye, as though wearied by the long flight across the river, discerns nothing on the further bank but the dim contours of a bushy wasteland. Higher upstream old fishing smacks and dismantled ferry boats hover on the edge of the water, while a motor ferry is unloading its cargo (it looks as though it were squashed flat under the stacks of hay as high as houses). The river is alive with shipping. A triple trail of smoke stretches out across the water. Steam tugs with their lazy suite of barges are getting ready for the voyage upstream to Barnaul. Heavy anchor chains dangle limply from the openings in the prow, which a Japanese poet has compared to a cow's nostrils. Before the docks lies a strip of dirty water covered with frothy bubbles; it glints oilily with dull rainbow hues, and above it

the gulls scream and flap their wings, carefully fishing up morsels of food from among the garbage as they glide by. Evening is falling. We climb the slope. Way over the roofs of the sheds, beyond the docks and the shipping, the water looks as steelgrey as the sky, with a tinge of yellow in the shallows.

And now, Safar, let's take a seat on these logs and watch the sky grow red. That shape which stretches slender and sinewy against the skyline beyond is the "Bridge of the Enthusiasts." Mark that down in your notebook, Safar. It is a monument to the fabled Siberian winter of 1930-31, that winter of heroic socialist labour. This bridge over the Ob is the realization of the impossible. The Komsomols of Novosibirsk achieved it. This incomparable youth of the working class battled with the elements no worse than did their fathers with the intervention. The Komsomol formed voluntary battalions of enthusiasts who declared that the limits set to human endurance were suspended. They worked day and night; on the days off they returned to the job, bringing hundreds of volunteers with them, organizing *subbotniks** on the ice, in the stifling compressed air of the sinking drums, at the concrete mixers; they worked in double shifts, they made forty mixings daily instead of fifteen, they laid bricks and mixed concrete at 45 degrees of frost; during nights of storm, lit by searchlights, they unloaded cement, gravel, rubble, iron and facing stone from the railway cars. Then, when March had come and several pillars were still far from being ready to lift the sweeping iron structure over the water, the youth made a vow: to complete these pillars at all costs before the ice began to melt. And

* Days of voluntary work.

they made good their promise. Today the trains of the Urals-Kuznetsk Combine thunder ceaselessly over the Bridge of the Enthusiasts. The names of the young brigadiers—Lyalikov, Zakonov, Kiriyeu, Yeremeyev, Layakyeu, Lorionov—will not be forgotten in Novosibirsk. Write them down in your notebook, Safar, and the names of the Komsomolkas, Boshka and Povarova, too. For these boys and girls and the bridge they built are free of all trace of “before the Revolution.”

2

As a matter of fact the jolting and clanging of the express train is still echoing in the back of our heads. But the train clatters and jolts no more. We are lying in this imposing and completely urban hotel with its lounges and balconies, and each of us is writing his first report in his own language. This is no provincial inn, be it noted. The customs and rites of a hotel in a capital city are here the rule. Everything you want is to be found in the room, and even something superfluous—namely, a small globe which turns about on its axis. The neighbourhood of Novosibirsk on the globe is almost worn away, as though eager fingers had been scratching the soil in search of treasure here. Silence. A clock ticks. The pens scratch over the paper. Flies buzz. All at once, through the stillness and through the closed windows something penetrates to you; it is the genuine hum of a big city. There it is, only you did not notice it before. It is difficult to say what it consists of. The rolling of wheels and the hooting of motors is mingled with it. I throw open the window, the noise suddenly grows

loud. A troop of Young Pioneers, with drums and trumpets, comes marching down the street. Oh, Novosibirsk—new Siberia! Would I could see you again in fifteen years time. Perhaps then my room would be in the twenty-sixth story of a new hotel building with a sweeping view over towers and turrets? Well, perhaps not. Maybe I am wrong; you must not and will not become a replica of Chicago after all. Our ideal is not that of the skyscraper. The socialist city is choosing other ways to go.

Four o'clock. Soon we would have to leave. We were full of expectation and eagerness to see things. And yet we were tired and weary so that we could hardly keep on our legs.

We had spent the first night in the railway station outside the gates of the town. The reason was that, as always, some conference of the Regional Council of Handicraftsmen's Unions in the Timber Industry was in session in the town just then, or else it was the annual meeting of the Regional Confederation of Fur Hunting Artels (although, as Abchuk observed, since it was now the best season for hunting, the place for the huntsmen should have been in the woods and on the moors)—in short, owing to the chronic overpopulation of all the hotels and lodgings of Novosibirsk, we had to sleep upon the plush seats of a disused gala car, which had been shunted somewhere into a siding, having once, in the old days, served His Excellency Governor-General So-and-So during his tours of inspection. Both the sleepers were occupied—the first by the Rostov couple, the second by some American technical experts. So we slept on the sofa, table and carpet of the dining car. It was a heavy slumber.

The bugs and cockroaches which His Excellency had left behind had been duly smoked out with sulphur, and the whole car, which was scantily ventilated, still smelt of the process. We awoke a little overwhelmed, and did not feel quite fresh in our heads again until we were making our way in the teeth of the morning wind through the traffic of the town in the direction of the mining machine plant.

Two industrial giants are rising to right and left of Novosibirsk. It cherishes them as the apple of its eye. They are its future source of power, its pride. The Siberian Combine Works, by far the greatest in the whole world, and the Mining Machine Plant, which is the first and for the time being the only one of its kind in the Soviet Union. It was to the latter that we first made our way. First along the highroad, then along a lane, finally across the fields, following the tracks of wheels where motor trucks had ploughed up the soil. Behind the town, on the right bank of the Ob, where the sorrel fallow land covers its nakedness with a growth of bushes and narrow strips of woodland, a new world has sprung into life. Along criss-crossing tracks the railway now stalks its way across the heath. Six hundred hectares of land are being planted with buildings. These long shops, where hundreds of men are now hammering and planing on the scaffolding, are to hold twenty thousand workers, who from 1934 onwards will produce 277,000 tons of machines and tools annually to the value 152,000,000 rubles—winding engines, compressors, coal-cutting machines, pneumatic hammers, pit pumps, ventilators, pit tracks and conveyors, besides locomotives and tip-cars for pit railways. On these 600 hectares

a plant is growing up which will strike a mighty blow for the technical independence of the Soviet Union.

The ground near the building site was torn up and soft like sawdust—you could fall soft if you tripped up over rails or logs. When we sat down to take a rest, it was on barrels of cement. Our guide, Klim Antonovich, who rattled like a money-bag with every step he took in his baggy blue corduroy suit—for he carried a multitude of tools, screws and other metallic objects in all his pockets—introduced us to his brigade of installators and made us acquainted with many young shock workers that morning.

But now we must be off! At five o'clock we had to pay a visit to the chief engineer of the Siberian Combine Works, Boris Moshchitsky. We arrived a little too late, he had been called away. His car drove us to the ferry and took us right on board over the landing stage. Getting across the Ob is quite a big business. A regular sea air blows across the stream, a damp, sharply-spiced breeze with a tang of sea travel about it. Two or three times you pass through powerful currents. How deep the water swells! It is like a sea trip in an automobile. You sit in a car and it sways and plunges like a boat, with a long fluent motion. Then a jolty landing, climbing up over an embankment of rubble, and onward again through steppe and bush. Near the village of Krivoshchokovo a block of houses springs out of the ground, then a second, a third, ever more and more. Clean straight lines of streets with avenues and rows of gardens—the beginning of a socialist town. And then—the building site of the factory. A plateau of four square kilometres with

the railway line stretching along one side, the main street leading straight to it: to the right, a cluster of buildings—the factory school, the dining room, the combine shop, the assembly shop, the wood treatment shop; beyond, the sawmills and desiccator; to the left, the offices of the management, the garage, the “iron combinat,” the forge, the foundry. On the river bank is the timber yard, to which 120,000 cubic metres of high-grade timber is floated every summer, and beside it is the future wharf.

Safar takes notes tirelessly: “... The Holt Works in America, hitherto the biggest factory producing agricultural machines, took 8,000 combines from the conveyor annually (at present its production has sunk below 2,000).” From the former village of Krivoshchokovo, which is turning into an industrial centre of the first rank, 25,000 harvester-combines will find their way to the boundless fields of Siberia.

3

Such is the growth and extension of Novosibirsk on the left bank of the Ob, where, in the new year of 1930, a few hundred students of the military school at N. appeared upon the desolate spot, shovelled away the snow and began hammering in the first pegs for trigonometrical measurements.

Today this river bank is loud with the clanking of cranes and the gnashing teeth of cogged wheels. The spot has long ago been fixed, ratified and marked out where a new municipal bridge is to unite both parts of the Siberian capital by the end of the Second Five-Year Plan. By that time Novosibirsk will be inhabited by a population of half a million, and it will be even harder than it is now to

take note, in three fleeting summer days, of all the life and bustle which pervade this city. . . .

Up here in our hotel the air is close even in the evening. On a terrace which is almost like a small roof garden you can drink tea by starlight. On the boulevard below a gust of wind is whirling up little clouds of dust. The asphalt sends up a hot smell as of something burning. "Ough," groans Abchuk, as he comes out through the door; he orders a mug of *myedok*, a sort of mead, and tears open the flowered collar of his blouse. "What a heat! . . . But it was glorious anyway." He means the famous theatre building which he has just been visiting. "It's dome shaped, a regular planetarium. The inside wall is a sort of acoustic-optical hemisphere, closing in around the spectators like the vault of heaven with a movie playing on it. They use a new kind of apparatus for lighting effects. The action of the play—mountains, steppes, naval battles, street life—surrounds you on all sides, it takes hold of you, grips you. The three thousand spectators sit there in the middle and they can't help taking part in the play!"

This terrace is the meeting place of our brigade. Some have been sending off letters, drawing money from the bank, visiting the radio station; one has been to the movies and Safar has just come back from the Park of Culture and Rest. As we sit there, drinking and smoking, a covey of pigeons swoops down above our heads. Suddenly I remember something I had intended to do and haven't done; I wanted to pay a visit to the editorial office of the German paper. In Novosibirsk is the office of *Der Kollektivist*, the Siberian regional newspaper which is read in many German districts, mainly in the

neighbourhood of New Omsk and Slavgorod. On the title page you can read, in Gothic script, that the paper is published by the West Siberian Regional Committee of the Communist Party. And above this title, like inscribed banners, are the slogans for the harvest campaign. Appearing three times weekly, its four pages set by hand in the oldfashioned Gothic characters, the paper reflects the workaday life of the German collective farms, full of work and struggle. It informs, admonishes, unmaskes, lashes. It is tremendously interesting! I read the "shock brigade reports" from the countryside over and over again. And the column entitled "Home and Farmyard." And then again something about the innovation to be introduced this spring, the "avio-sowing" on the West Siberian State farms—sowing by means of aeroplanes. "That's the stuff," you exclaim as you read, and the newspaper rustles appreciatively in response. And now something about the uses of harvester combines. . . .

But I am interrupted by a volley of greetings. "What price punctuality!" Our guests come out on to the terrace. Two leading workers of the Siberian Combine Works whom we met today on the left bank of the river and who promised to join us on our last evening in Novosibirsk, to tell us the story of the plant. We have heaps of questions to ask, but first Engineer V. wants to take a rest and a smoke. Night is falling rapidly.

The engineer is no longer wearing the lime-smeared leather coat in which he conducted us through the works a couple hours ago. He has found time to get out of his top boots, to take a shave and to put on something which looks like a smart light-coloured suit. "Here's to our paper which sent you

to us," he says, as he lifts his glass. That's right, the *Izvestia* is the paper which has taken the Siberian Combine Works under its "patronage".

In the darkness, under the broad rim of his hat, his face is only visible in the glow of his cigarette. We sit and listen to the memorable life-story of one of the young giants of socialist industry.

CHAPTER FOUR

SIBCOMBINESTROY—ONE OF 518

Clearing the Site—Comrade Morin Comes Back Empty-Handed—The Ice Breaks on the Ob—Burying the past—Fighting for Bricks and Men—Fighting for Victory—The Peasants Come—"What Have You Done, Brother?"—Enemies—Thirteen Machines an Hour—Combines in Action

CHAPTER FOUR

SIBCOMBINESTROY—ONE OF 518

I

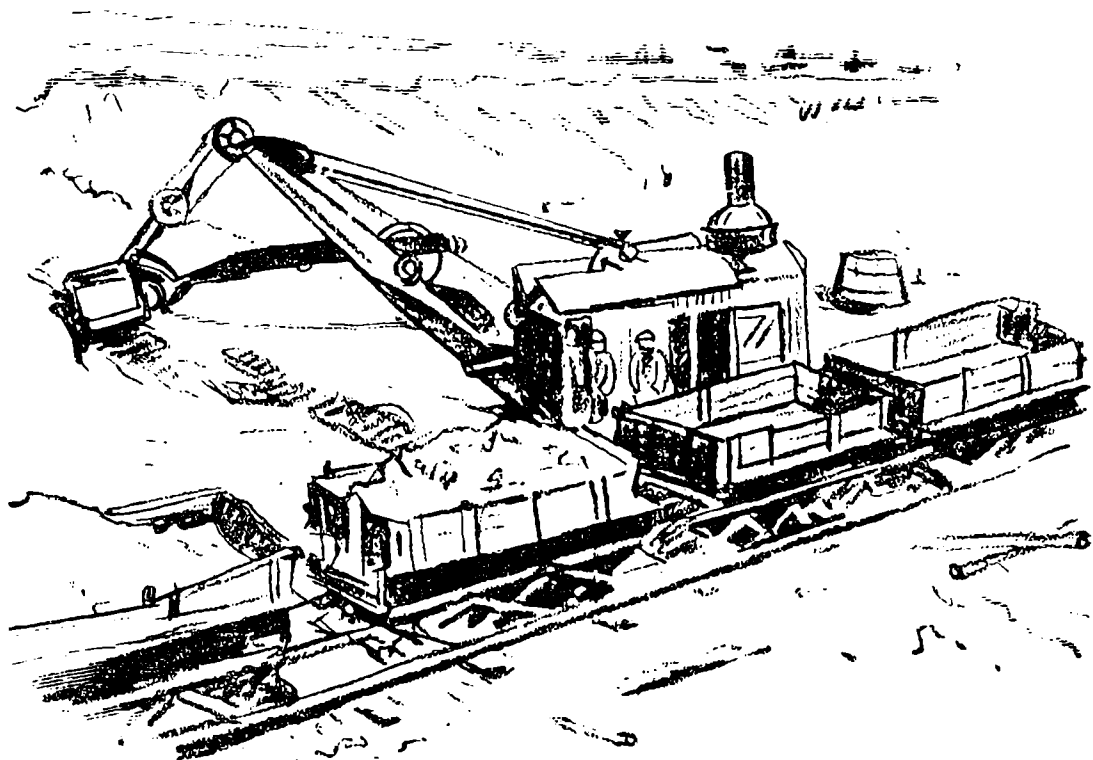
The story begins in Moscow, in the middle of December 1929, in the Gosplan. The Gosplan is the State Planning Commission, the cradle in which all great socialist works are conceived. Here it was decided to found an organization whose name was to be "the State Trust for the Construction of Works for the Production of Combines and Complex Agricultural Machines in Novosibirsk," or, more briefly, "Sibcombinestroy." The management was entrusted to Comrade Morin, a former mechanic from the town of Sormovo on the Volga.

By December 25 Morin had already packed up his instruments and blueprints, selected his furs and felt boots, and was on his way eastward. A detachment of students from the military school at N., with their commanders and political leaders, went with him in the same train. Their plan amounted to a socialist *subbotnik* on a grand scale—clearing the building site of snow and bushes.

On January 1, 1930, they first saw the Ob. Its covering of ice was buried deep in snow; sleigh tracks stretched from bank to bank. Near the tiny station of Krivoschokovo, hitherto unknown and forgotten, the baggage of the expedition was unloaded. With axes and spades in hand, they advanced like a line of skirmishers to clear the site. In two weeks time the steppe was razed and levelled.

Black angular holes yawned in the white landscape.

A few weeks more and long looming shapes stood out with geometrical precision against the background of fresh snow. Barracks. Then workshops and houses, sheds for the building materials, stables and foremen's offices, a dining room, a garage, a fire station, and beyond, another lot of barracks with a school, their own dining room, a temporary club and a food store. Smoke rose from the chimneys. The men were muffled up to their ears, the motors were muffled too. Thick cables brought light and power across the Ob from Novosibirsk. The cranes, like screeching giraffes, stretched their long necks tirelessly hither and thither. The steam navvies bit greedily into the freezing earth.



In the office of the management, at a table with a red cloth, between walls decorated with maps and placards, hung with telephone receivers, sat Morin, a broad-shouldered giant, sleepless, a stubble of beard on his pointed chin, his prominent cheek bones protruding under tired eyes. A welter of papers littered the table. The logs crackled in the stove, but Morin was cold as ice. In the brain that lay behind his deep-set eyes he was formulating his monthly report from these crumpled pieces of gray and brown paper which lay before him—the reports of his brigades. Rows of figures passed through his sunken head—the figures of his brigades, and the control figures of the Gosplan. And every figure represented a square, a slice of crumbling stony earth, which had been hewn out or was to be hewn out from the black soil of the steppe. And as he sat and calculated, Morin chewed at the short stumpy pipe which he had brought with him from across the Atlantic.

2

Yes, Comrade Morin has been in America, that was a very instructive story for him, and for America too. The Soviet Union needed a design for the combine works. Nobody had had much experience in this field. Obviously, the Americans must be asked for technical advice and the Soviets did not try to get anything for nothing. In America, as is well known, it is only the Salvation Army and lynch law which operate free of charge.

So a group of experts, headed by Morin, the future chief of the construction job, crossed the Atlantic. On the other side they spent several weeks in several states and towns, conferred, consulted.

Morin negotiated with all possible technicians and economists and—left the United States empty-handed (if we except the pipe he brought back).

How was that? Did the Americans refuse the Red director their valuable aid? By no means. Only, fully conscious that they were indispensable, they first demanded several million gold rubles for every piece of advice; secondly, they demanded a guarantee that the Soviet Union would refrain from exporting any kind of agricultural machinery for fifteen years to come. Finally, the American experts showed in their trial designs that they were unable to meet the specific requirements of the socialist methods of production. Their much-lauded experience had been gained in comparatively "small" enterprises. Their boldest flights of fancy did not go beyond a capacity of four thousand combines annually. And indeed that was enough for them. Think it over for a minute; how many farmers, even in good times, can afford to have their own combines? Consequently, the Americans will not need a factory producing 25,000 machines annually until the agrarian crisis has been overcome—that is to say, until the masses of farmers in the West and South adopt the system of all-round collectivization. And that will not be possible until the workers and farmers seize power and make the U.S.A. into the U.S.S.R.A.

This fact was grasped by Comrade Morin. He gave them his best thanks for their hospitality and said "goodbye" to America (his Russian pronunciation lending a few extra shades of force to the word). He returned home via Europe and the design for Sibcombinestroy was drawn up in Moscow.

3

A few weeks more, and the ice broke on the Ob. For days and nights on end the swollen waters of the river whirled great blocks of ice to the Arctic Sea (a case of taking coals to Newcastle). A strong south wind came blowing from Turkestan—the line of the Turksib Railway—swept over the roofs of the barracks, sent the sparks flying from the fires, billowed miniature waves in the puddles. The holes in the earth were full of muddy snow water. And at the end of April the sun shone out and summer was there in a bound. West Siberia has no spring, no “sweet season” of lilac blossom and pussywillows. Summer comes at one stroke.

By May 2 the air was as heavy as in the tropics, the last trickle of water had oozed away, the soil of the steppe was already crisp and cracking in places. The inhabitants of Novosibirsk, who came swarming over the railway bridge, sweated in their dark holiday winter coats; they pointed to the first swirls of powdery dust which rose from behind the wheels of the trucks. The cars were decked in red cloth, over which clumsy white letters were scrawled. These were the fighting slogans, welcoming the laying of the foundation stone of Sibcombine-stry.

The worker delegates from the regional capital, from the Party and trade union committee, from the Komsomol and the garrison of the Red Army—at least a thousand guests in all—brought with them the songs and enthusiasm of the Novosibirsk May First celebration to the still desolate left bank of the Ob.

On the edge of the building site they were greeted by an array of streamers, banners and brass bands.

The speaker's tribune rose up above a sea of sheep-skin caps, furs, beards. They shook with incredulous laughter when they saw the big drawing of the finished plant as it was to be two years from now on this spot where today nothing was to be seen but holes in the earth, bare steppe, wind and sky.

One of the seasonal workers, one of the hundreds who had come to reinforce the workers of Sibcombinestroy, threw his arms up in the air.

"Our manager, Comrade Morin, has been in Merika and has seen how the Merikans build their . . . what do you call the things?—skyscrapers, those houses that scrape the sky...."

"Sometimes they build the roof first," another interjects, "and then put the house in underneath, don't they?"

And in the laughter which follows, the first speaker adds in complete seriousness: "If the earth in Merika can stand such a weight, then I reckon it won't sink in, as the priest says it will, when we build our combine plant."

And then, after the opening ceremony, the foundation stone was laid. A great silence had fallen. All eyes were fixed on the stone. It was a heavy, obstinate block. Its severe angularity suggested the outlines of a stone coffin, a sarcophagus, sinking into the grave. The date of this May Day was chiselled on its granite flank. And if this parable of the sarcophagus is interpreted more exactly and profoundly, you will see that many things were carried to the grave and buried forever in this stone coffin of a foundation stone—the wooden plough of the Siberian forefathers and indeed the whole system of poor patriarchal agriculture of old and

backward Siberia. So do foundations spring out of graves.

4

Here, where the foundation stone has been laid, the office of the factory management was to stand. According to plan, the factory school was to have been begun first. This arrangement emphasized the importance of training new cadres. But unfortunately the exact designs for a factory school had not yet arrived. The building plans were expected to come, quite literally, from heaven; they were to be dropped on the bank of the Ob by a special air express from Moscow. But as often happens, heaven proved treacherous. What was to be done? Under the circumstances it was decided to begin at the other end.

Men were there, building materials were there. But there were not enough men and not enough building materials. When an industrial construction is decided upon in December, after all the available credits and stocks of material for the coming year have been distributed in August, the chief of the construction job must fight his hardest for every brick and every ruble, for every beam and every sheet of iron. He must accomplish veritable miracles of organization and combination. It is folly to assume that in planned economy personal initiative is robbed of all scope in advance, that one central head thinks for everybody, drives everybody on; that nothing remains but the obedient bustle of dumb transmission belts. No, woe to the chief of one of the five hundred and eighteen construction jobs of the first Five-Year Plan if he does not daily and hourly think and act for himself in com-

petition with all the five hundred and seventeen other chiefs who are striving towards the same goal. His "deficit materials" are mercilessly snatched from him, he is left without cement, crossbeams, iron casings. And he must attribute his discomfiture to himself, must himself answer for his failure before the working class.

If the shortage of building materials was rather due to the unfavourable time, the shortage of qualified workers must be attributed to the place. Siberian steppe, the desolate bank of the Ob—3,400 kilometres from Moscow, 3,900 from Leningrad, 4,300 from Kharkov. Siberia could at first produce only a small number of skilled labourers—bricklayers, carpenters, concrete mixers, installators, mechanics—to say nothing of the lack of experienced engineers, metallurgists, building technicians, architects, designers, economists and planners. So recruiting had to be done. There had long ceased to be any "people out of a job." As for others, just try to enthuse a Moscow or Kharkov specialist with the prospect of going to the left bank of the Ob, try to enthuse him about it so much that he will immediately throw up his job in one of these capitals and make an unrestrainable dash towards distant Siberia! In August and September 1930 an attempt was made by the Supreme Council of National Economy to mobilize a staff of technical workers for Sibcombinestroy. What was the result?

"You can't imagine all the tricks that were played!" said Engineer V. "There had never been such an epidemic among my colleagues of such violent organic and functional ailments, from simple cases of heart failure, intestinal catarrh and varicose veins down to utter exhaustion of the whole nervous sys-

tem! People would suddenly remember that they had to undergo cures and operations which could not possibly be delayed. And as if that were not enough, the various trusts and business organizations now began to defend their 'irreplaceable' specialists tooth and nail. In the private offices of Red directors, in telephone talks and conferences, these 'irreplaceable' comrades would be credited with the most amazing virtues, their departure depicted as some grave catastrophe. Even persons whose departure would normally have been welcomed—hobbledehoys for whom there was no use—were proclaimed by over-zealous officials to be 'organic parts' of the mechanism of their trust. Persons whose calibre amounted to that of a glowworm were advanced in the imagination of their superiors to the position of major planets. Not a barrel of cement was surrendered without a struggle. Cement is badly needed! And as for men! Not under any circumstances. We refuse to let them go.

"So substitutes were sent instead of the real thing—pottery workers and stucco plasterers instead of building engineers. Untrained foremen instead of technicians.... I still remember the scenes which my wife made when I was presented with the three years' contract to work here. It was almost a case of desperation and divorce! 'Engineer Arkhipov,' she sobbed, 'reported sick at once, and Shirokov isn't going either. Why has it got to be you?' And so it went on all day long until I left. But then—it was just the time of the first snowfall—she settled her sister in our Leningrad apartment and came to join me. Today she is delighted with Novosibirsk and the thought of our coming return makes her melancholy....

"But to get back to the building site. At first we had scarcely half a dozen experienced master builders, all the rest were young fellows, fresh from school, not yet able to manage the work properly, to distribute the men, to operate to the full the still insufficient supplies of machinery. There was no strict, uniform business management on the building site; discipline was lax. The Party and trade union organizations contented themselves with 'registering' the defects. Educative mass work was begun but not carried further. Such conditions, of course, created the most favourable environment conceivable for the workings of the class enemy. Bureaucracy flourished, sabotage was begun tentatively. Until at last the regional committee of the Party intervened and made its great clean-up. . . ."

5

Our guest paused and refilled his glass. Then he continued. "By September 1 the walls of the management offices, factory school and one or two subsidiary shops had shot up perceptibly; forests of scaffolding were growing on the broad expanse, and the noise and bustle left nothing to be desired—everything seemed to be going full swing. And yet—the year's plan had only been fulfilled fifty percent, the figures showed much waste of time and aimless work. A breach in the plan—the word is terrible, but the thing is still more terrible! If you know it only from reading about it in the papers, you cannot feel the full ugly bitterness of such a moment. You must have become a part of the works, you must breathe with its lungs in order to understand what it feels like when the breathing of the plant suddenly stops. A breach in the plan. M. Michelet, our

colleague, whose pen has helped not a little to spread the story of Sibcombinestroy, has made a brilliant comparison between a breach in the plan and a break-through by the enemy at the front—the Russian language has the same word for both, *proryv*. The army fights, it is not fighting badly, it feels its rear secure. The various detachments of troops are, so it would seem, welded together by *one* will. Then suddenly, quite unawares (it is always quite unawares!) a tiny chink is allowed to appear somewhere, two companies lose contact. The enemy first puts out his feelers, then he crawls cautiously into the tiny rift, drives in a wedge, thrusts out his elbows to either side, widens the gap, and then all at once he is attacking the rear. The front is broken! Retreat, otherwise the army may be surrounded!

“In such cases picked reserves are rushed to the danger spot. The commanders are reinforced, the fighting units are regrouped at top speed. A couple of rapid, clear-sighted moves and the confusion is overcome, the retreat is arrested. Forces are mustered for a counter-attack. The picked shock troops take the offensive and the main body of the army follows them. Victory is assured!

“So it was with us, in the middle of September. The picked reserves were the forces sent us by the Central Committee of the Party and the auxiliary brigades sent us by the regional committee. Strong critical Bolshevik hands felt the pulse of our construction job, methodically sought out the weak spots, replaced a couple of economists, transferred a couple of specialists, reinforced the leadership of the Party and trade union. Then the brigades were purged of loafers and drunkards; they were regrouped with a view to productive competition.

Each brigade elected its best man as brigadier. The badly neglected cultural work on the building site, in the club and, above all, in the barracks of the seasonal workers, was at last set going and was given moreover a mighty incentive by an event which by a lucky chance occurred just at that time when the breach in the plan at Sibcombinestroy had been made good.

"You are certain to have heard that thanks to the initiative of our patron newspaper, the *Izvestia*, a conference of collective farmers was convened at Sibcombinestroy in September 1930. Six regions sent delegates—Siberia, the Urals, the Middle Volga, Kazakstan, Bashkiria, Buryat Mongolia. Advice was given as to the mechanization of the harvest work and of the coming winter sowing. On the same day building was started on the central and most important department of the future combinat. I remember that day well. It was September 19, shortly after my arrival. As a newcomer, I walked over the building site and did not find it exactly hospitable. The forest of scaffolding was intersected by clearings full of rubbish, horse dung, fragments of brick, overturned carts and ends of boards. A dull overcast day. Autumn. Mud on all sides, no roads had yet been made; clods of heavy damp earth clung to wheel spokes, boots and hoofs. Some three hundred collective farmers had arrived. The representatives from Novosibirsk were to be seen again, as on the May Day festival, but now new faces appeared alongside them—weatherbeaten bearded faces, furrowed and bony, two or three of them with slit eyes; gnarled hands, the rigid fingers looking like the earthy roots of uprooted trees. A mixture of many dialects, the hard "g" of central Russia merging

into the "h" of the south, the comical drawl of the Volga contrasting strangely with the raucous guttural of the Tatar or the soft accent of the Urals, but all these dialects expressed one common will, one common feeling of emulation. It was one of those innumerable "*smychkas*," a fraternization between the workers and peasants of our country, which is not celebrated by fine speeches but where each side clinches agreements with the other and holds him to his word: How have you been fulfilling your pledge, brother, what have you done for our great common cause and how are you going to continue? We give you bread, meat and fruits. Workers, give us machines to handle, so that we may save ourselves labour and reap a better harvest; so that you may feed better, workers—you who are completing our great combine works which will give us machines; with these machines we will tame the stern nature of this country and harness the fruitful earth; so we will be your equal and all barriers will be broken down between town and country. And now—you have let the enemy break through the front. . . .

"The bearded collective farmers in their steppe jackets signed an agreement. And the workers from the construction job signed it too. And it was also signed by the seasonal workers, many of whom were themselves collective farmers. A spark of enthusiasm leapt from one to the other. In all the barracks the September appeal of the Central Committee of the Party to the workers of Sibcombine-stroy was hanging on the wall. And now each one of its words has a face behind it—a seamed and weathered face, a bearded and familiar face, and each word speaks with an audible voice full of warm comradely strength.

"What was decided upon? A good and well-tried remedy—a 'storm month to liquidate the breach in the plan.' It was the moment when the retreat comes to an end and the picked troops take the offensive. A truly Bolshevik spirit of certainty in victory took hold of the workers. Every day new brigades challenged one another to competition. When the concrete-mixers performed double their daily assignments, some of the brigades of carpenters and bricklayers succeeded in almost trebling theirs.

"Once again Novosibirsk came to the rescue. Socialist *subbotniks* of Communists, Komsomols, employees, Red Army men were organized; everyone capable of wielding a tool, including many girls and women, went to spend their 'days off' across the river. That was still the time of the 'continuous five-day working week,' and so every morning a new troop of volunteers would cross. Freight wagons brought them punctually to the building site; in closed ranks, dripping with rain, they marched singing, with spades on their shoulders, to the place of work. Within a month the number of labour hours put in by these volunteers amounted to tens of thousands. And believe me, still more important than the actual amount of work done was the graphic proof of this great community of labour which directly embodied the unity of interests of town and country.

"Every day I could see how the squat shapes of the shops and departments were shooting up. And little by little the specialists, too, began to take fire. The fever of the 'storm month' was infectious. The storm brigades that had been formed—1,200 men strong—were joined by half a hundred engineers and technicians, who, moreover, pledged themselves

to stick it out on the construction site until the job had been finished. During this month, saturated with the warm endless autumn rain which converted the earth into a sticky morass, the building site was ablaze with the fire of socialist competition. There was a perpendicular drop in the curve of the statistics showing idleness and labour turnover, while the curve of work and tempo soared high above it, mounting upward from week to week.

“When on October 10 the results of forty days of intensive work were summed up, the picture that presented itself would have been unbelievable to anyone who had not grasped the ‘miracles’ wrought by socialist competition. In these forty days the workers had fulfilled more than one-half of their year’s assignment of building! The last report sprawled in big letters over every wall newspaper: ‘Our pledge has been kept! 101.5 per cent of the year’s plan fulfilled.’

“Maxim Gorky has called upon the country to write the histories of its factories and works. I have thought over this proposition and I find that the history of our industrial plants will be a direct continuation of the history of the Civil War. Every Soviet construction job is the scene of the most real, embittered class struggle. Yes, we even had some of Kolchak’s men in the barracks.... Building and warfaring! This fact will become clear as day to anyone who undertakes to study the history of our plant. It was a real fighting spirit by virtue of which the workers of Sibcombinestroy, under the leadership of the brigades sent by the Bolshevik Central Committee and the regional committee, made good the ‘breach’ in the plan, restored the front and beat the enemy.

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"Yes, the enemy. Not only in the figurative sense. And not only as the embodiment of laziness, extravagance, shortsightedness and bureaucratic ossification. The more determined and successful the socialist attack, the more desperate does the resistance become. Whose resistance? That remains a mystery at first. One time telephone wires or conduit pipes are 'accidentally' cut; coarse sand finds its way 'by chance' into the clockwork of some delicate apparatus or a foreign body appears in the bearing of a driving wheel. Then you know that there is a foreign body hiding among the workers. And the workers soon cast him out, as a healthy organism gets rid of a splinter. Then again, water taps are turned on 'unexpectedly' during the night and a flood of water destroys the new plaster; and 'now and again' a bottle of *samogonka*, of home-distilled spirits, finds its way to the building trench and someone who reeks strongly of grog and who professes to be a 'former agricultural labourer' sighs: 'Ah, to hell, Savka! Wasn't it better to be a harvest hand under the tsars!' In our factory paper a news item once appeared telling how a group of carpenters, under the influence of a priest's son named Chinyakov, addressed a regular ultimatum to the management, demanding an increase in the meat and sugar rations, the doling out of so-and-so many pairs of boots, new work clothes, etc.—or we quit the job tomorrow!' And this in the middle of the storm month when 1,500 men were literally forgetting about meals, change of shifts and sleep in the fury of work!

"Well, they were beaten; the Chinyakovs were routed. We concluded the first year's work with honour. The anniversary of the October Revolution

in 1930 was celebrated on both sides of the river at once. In the town, at the meeting of the active Party and Soviet workers, Morin gave the report of his victory and thanked the regional committee and the working people of Novosibirsk for the help they rendered during the storm month. 'The workers and technical staff of Sibcombinestroy,' said he, 'are giving the country the following gift on the thirteenth anniversary of proletarian dictatorship—the first six completed buildings of the combine works, the factory school, the garage, the central warehouse and the mighty halls of three workshops.' Meanwhile, on the building site, we too were holding our celebrations in the workers' club, decorated for the occasion. Brigadiers told the story of episodes in the struggle, told it like soldiers after a battle that has been born. The victors of socialist competitions were called up and given prizes; and standing there on the platform, shifting from one foot to the other, their prize—a winter coat, a radio set or an accordion—clasped under their arm, they told how it was done. And thus this gay celebration became a sort of production conference with musical interludes!

"And so, my friends, now you know something about the work we are doing here. But we are still not satisfied with ourselves; we have the feeling that we could get better work out of ourselves.

"Our path is marked out before us by the Great Plan. By 1934 Sibcombinestroy is to reach its full capacity—25,000 combines annually—and in addition to that, remember, there are to be 35,000 tractor-drawn sowing machines and 30,000 hay mowers; that makes, as I said, thirteen machines an hour.

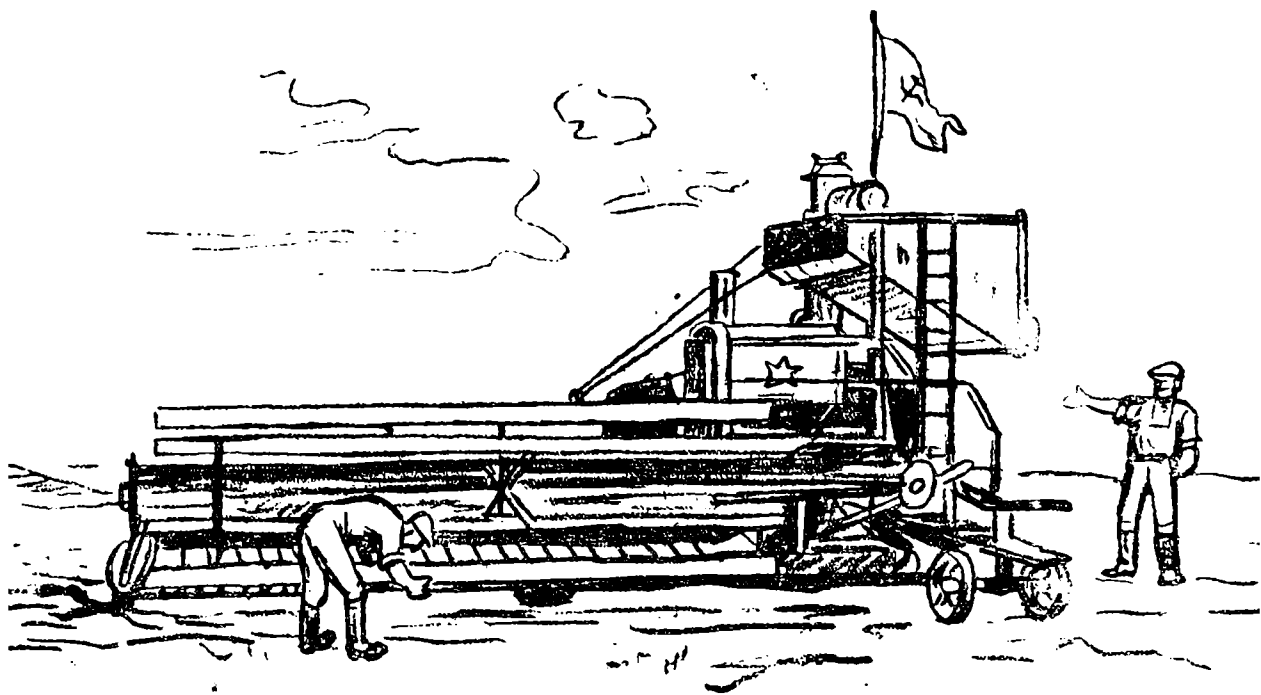
"Sibcombinestroy, if you like to put it that way, will beat the American world record in combine production six or seven times over. Now the Americans can come and learn from Comrade Morin if they want to. But they won't want to, you can take my word for it!"

He lifted his glass and emptied it.

6

What is a combine and what does it do? Safar put the question in his usual formula: Were there combines before the revolution?

Our other guest, Comrade Schanz, designer and inventor, felt this was the province which lay nearest to his heart and which formed to some extent the hinterland of his creative dreams. And so he took the floor: "Combines—our friend Michelet has called them wonderfully cunning machines, more



cunning than war elephants—are . . . how shall I put it? . . . they are an emblem of socialist Siberia. And in the future they will have to figure on the Soviet coat-of-arms, perhaps at the foot of a blast furnace or a blooming mill. This will be the logical development from a hammer and sickle. . . .”

Safar then learned that there had been combines before the revolution, though not in Russia. The first model of a combine was made in America in 1886, but remained for a long time almost unnoticed. And no wonder—in capitalist agriculture! The combine is a machine with seven-league boots. It is a moving monster that requires space; it likes to stride over broad acres, it doesn't pay the ordinary farmer to use it. The combine, even more imperatively than the tractor, demands the socialization of agriculture, the combination of the little isolated plots of ground; it demands planned economy and large-scale farming on gigantic scales. You don't use a cannon to shoot sparrows. And consequently the combine was not popular. Not until the beginning of our century, when some enterprising employers had perfected it and made it cheaper, did it begin to come into its own. Its advance then was indeed quite rapid. Those were the good old days of prosperity. After 1927 it was produced on the conveyor system and dropped in price. “Unfortunately” so did bread. . . . And so the combine was given a new function; it had to serve as scapegoat for the sins of capitalism. It was made responsible for the agrarian crisis. So-called scientific and ostensibly technical journals in the United States began to speak about it in the following terms: “These combines have invaded the country and they are more grievous than a plague of locusts. They

have shamefully lowered the price of grain" ("depreciated" it in the language of the capitalists) "and they have hastened the coming of overproduction. They have brought on the crisis. Down with the combines! Besides, they are immoral. They deprive men of their work. And it is the will of god that man should learn to work again." (There follows a quotation from the Bible: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" etc.) "Save your souls! Save the prices of wheat! Destroy the combines for ever and ever, amen."

So when the combine saw how whole crops were being burned, used as fertilizer or tipped into the sea—when it saw that there were even designs against its life (as though it were a Negro or a Darwinist), it made up its mind to leave America. And so it came to the country of state and collective farms, whose socialist acres stretch for boundless miles over all horizons. Here at last was the soil which it needed. Here the people treated it with loving care, stroked it almost tenderly; they praised its qualities and prophesied that it would have a glorious future. The combine found its true home in the Soviet Union and here, as we now know, it will reproduce its species with considerable rapidity.

It was not so long ago that the Soviet harvest fields made their first acquaintance with the combine. That was in 1929. As the first instalment, forty machines were sent over. A nervous tremor passed through many meetings and magazines! "Away with them!" roared a couple of elderly "specialists" of the type of Chayanov* the wrecker.

* Chayanov: professor and former official of the Commissariat of Agriculture of the U.S.S.R., involved in the plot to organize kulak counter-revolution in 1930.

"Our climate is a quite exceptional climate and our corn is altogether exceptional corn. Mechanized harvesting such as they have in America is quite out of the question!" And, as usual, one or two opportunists were quite ready to follow their lead and turn the "alien" out of the country without more ado. "Be careful nothing happens," they chattered in terror-stricken tones. But before three summers had passed, the "alien" had become naturalized, nay more, had become an honoured citizen.

It was not so long ago that the collective farms did their harvesting in the following way. First came the reaping machine; it was drawn by a horse with men leading it by the bridle and cracking their whips. Then came the sheaf binder. Then the sheaves had to be stooked, and left to dry, which depended upon a very unreliable factor—the weather. Finally the last process was the carting and threshing, which again required the co-operation of men, animals and machines. Thus there were six separate processes; two complicated machines and dozens of animals were required, and hundreds of hours' work were wasted.

The combine unites all these processes. It reaps, binds into sheaves, dries and threshes. One single combined mechanism performs the whole work of harvesting. If it could only grind and bake, you could take home loaves of bread straight from the harvest field. Formerly, the last word in agricultural technique was the tractor-driven sheaf-binding machine. The combine, however, puts this machine completely in the shade. It can finish one hectare in 1.3 hours, while the sheaf-binding machine takes 4 hours to do it. And for this work the combine requires 10.5 kilograms of fuel, while the sheaf-

binder (including threshing) needs 16.5 kilograms. The combine, worked by two men, replaces the work of 30 men and eighteen horses. And to crown all the saving in time, petrol and labour power, it has one special advantage as well. Investigations carried out on a state farm in the Northern Caucasus by the Institute for Agricultural Rationalization have shown that the combine, by excluding hundreds of manual processes, only allows from 2 to 4 per cent of the whole crop to remain on the field, while the losses are from 9 to 12 per cent when the sheaf binder is used. So great is the quantity of corn that gets lost during the processes of stooking, drying and carting.

However, we do not want to idealize the picture. Even the combine has its weak spots. Its design—and we have examined overseas brands as well—is far from perfect. For example, crops which are not dry or are not quite ripe cause trouble to the combine. It refuses to function, throws up the sponge, if the humidity of the crop exceeds 14 or 16 per cent. It is no lover of the morning dew, and in the evening also its work deteriorates somewhat. It requires an experienced and well-trained driver, who knows just how to handle it. The ordinary tractor driver cannot do the job, even when he has had a couple of lessons with an American instructor.

Every new harvest brings with it a harvest of new experience. We are learning to design better and to instruct better. Three special institutes for the rationalization of agricultural work have concluded agreements for socialist competition among themselves. They compete in research work and inventions. Now that the Soviets have their own combines, they are going to improve and perfect them.

Later, in August, we saw combines in action. Seen from the distance, swaying hardly perceptibly, they looked like great water-fowl, paddling over the boundless sea of the harvest fields. Clucking softly as they move, their bodies half submerged in the rich billowing tide of rye, their towering elevators collect the corn, which is passed thence to the rear boxes and emptied from time to time into motor trucks. It is an unforgettable sight to see ten, twelve or fifteen such mighty harvester-combines moving at even speed in an oblique line across the vast field from horizon to horizon. They dip down, disappear and come back hours later on the other side, this time with their lights burning. They work by searchlight through the night and are ready to begin work again with the first shift next morning.

7

Of my memories of Novosibirsk none is so tenacious as this picture of the combines, this hint of the new Siberia of the future. And besides this, strangely enough, what sticks in my memory is the notice in big letters on the inside of all the doors; "Don't forget to turn off the light when you go out." It shows how the power requirements of this young city are gigantically growing and how economy has been raised from a private virtue to a public duty. Finally, the revolving globe in our room which one of us gives such a violent spin as we leave that it goes on turning long after we have obediently switched off the light and closed the door from the outside.

CHAPTER FIVE
WESTERN SIBERIA, PAST
AND PRESENT

*Nikita Demidov Makes Cannon for Peter the Great—A German Professor Visits the Kuzbas in 1734—Forcible Baptism of the Tatars—Serfdom—Delving in the Archives—Easter Eggs and Volleys of Shot—The Man Who Told the Tsar—
“Not Governors, but Horse Butchers!”—
Coal Waiting To Be Used*

CHAPTER FIVE

WESTERN SIBERIA, PAST AND PRESENT

I

Novosibirsk flashes by the window of our car for the last time. The trellis work on the house fronts looks quite different now from what it did the morning we arrived—as though we had been living here for a year or so. At the station, which is being renovated and completely rebuilt, those who are making the journey to the Kuzbas have their own departure platform.

He who leaves Novosibirsk for the Kuzbas does not do so without taking a whole pile of passes and instructions in his pocket, supplemented by a handful of letters to friends from strangers whom it is impossible to refuse. So, laden with messages, we leave Novosibirsk at the modest speed of a passenger train, and once again the landscape of station buildings, squat village houses, festoons of telegraph wires and revolving horizons of steppe is set in motion.

As far as the Yurga switchbox we follow the main line in the direction of Irkutsk. Then we turn off at a right angle to the right, and begin making our way between long lines of coal, ore and coke trains which flash by ever faster and faster. This former branch line has been doubled and trebled, but that is not enough, for the flow of freight has increased thirtyfold.

The journey by express train from Moscow to Novosibirsk lasted about a hundred hours. If you are not in luck, it may easily happen that your journey from Novosibirsk to Kuznetskstroy will last almost as long, although it is here a question of a mere five hundred kilometres. The reason for this is the tremendous congestion of traffic on this line, from Yurga to Stalinsk,* which was once the "Kolchugino** branch line" and has now become the main line of the Kuzbas. The right angle of the triangle, whose apex is Yurga, now has as its hypotenuse the Leninsk-Novosibirsk line. The new and shorter route between the Kuzbas and the west brings this region nearer to the Urals. And it is this end alone which the great Bridge of the Enthusiasts over the Ob was designed to serve. Thus this problem of the endless congestion on the branch line is being radically solved.

Beyond Yurga to the southwest the train moves more slowly as it begins to climb; it is like the journey from Prussia into Saxony—the landscape becomes more varied and picturesque with its undulating woodlands.

Not only the landscape but the people too begin to change their character. At the small stations picturesque Siberians bundle into the train—Siberians is the name given to the hundred per cent Trans-Ural Russians who for generations have lived in the East, lost to their "mother Russia". They are hairy, bearded, wearing long coats with belts. For them such a journey is nothing but a short excursion. On their pleasure trips they catch a glimpse of the new plants, view the life of these new towns,

* Formerly Kuznetsk.

** Now renamed Leninsk.

the cities of the Kuzbas, which are no longer young but which are new towns nevertheless—Byelovo, Kemerovo, Scheglovsk, Leninsk, Prokopyevsk and Stalinsk. They accustom themselves to the new names, to the new horizons of pitheads, smokestacks and suspension railways. And they bring back pictures and stories to their collective farms.

The level-headed Siberians were never good Christians. They were heretics or semi-heretics. They mixed up the various saints, and they did not join in the pious pilgrimages to the monastery of Kiev. The unpractical desire to visit the "holy places" was foreign to their nature. But now a curiosity of another and higher kind draws them towards Kuznetskstroy. Here, before their very doors, a miracle has sprung up out of the desert soil in two years' time, more significant and thrilling than New Athos,* more splendid than the old monastic fortress of the trinity at Sergievo. That is something really worth a pilgrimage.

The poor peasants of Siberia are filled with a secular curiosity, a curiosity for what is new. During the Civil War, west Siberia produced tens of thousands of Red partisans. And now these peasants are cautiously coming to dip one foot in the rapidly rising river of industry.

2

It is more than two hundred years since industry and Christianity invaded west Siberia. Christianity was not in the vanguard. It only made good the trails which had been blazed by war and trade. Industry followed in the bloody tracks of Christianity. It

* In Russian, "Novy Aphon," formerly a monastery on the Black Sea coast, now a rest-home and sanatorium for workers.

marched into the country, with a rattle of crosses and hammers and handcuffs. Take the crooked sabre of the Cossacks, the cross of the missionary, the hammer of the mine-owner—all these intertwined with the chains of hard labour, and you have an emblem of the old Siberia. To complete the picture we should really add the goose-quill of the government clerk to this emblematic design, for it was bureaucracy which conquered the country next. However, let us begin with the cross and the hammer.

We will commence our story with the house of Demidov. The forefather of this Russian industrial dynasty, Nikita Demidov, the son of a peasant serf and afterwards a blacksmith in Tula, became the progenitor of the mining industry in the Urals and the Altai. Like the house of Krupp, the Demidovs made their money as army contractors. Nikita purveyed guns and cannon to Peter the Great during the Swedish war. He too—like Krupp—utilized the bloody occasion to the very dregs. He too—like Krupp—was afterwards raised to noble rank. Then in 1699 in the district of Yekaterinburg he founded, with the help of state subsidies, the first iron works of the Urals, which the tsar three years later gave him as his own property on the condition that he should found only cannon and with the privilege of putting his serfs to work in the iron works. He fleeced his peasants to the bone. And he left as his heritage a whole metallurgical industry comprising hundreds of mines and works, and feudal rule over tremendous estates with thousands of inhabitants—an inexhaustible source of almost gratuitous labour power! The riches of the Demidovs grew to fabulous dimensions. A great-great-great grandson of the Tula blacksmith, Anatole Nikolaye-

vich Demidov, bore the noble title of Prince of San Donato, married Mathilde Bonaparte, the niece of Napoleon the First, and after five years' marriage he began, quite in the style of Nikita, to beat her black and blue until she divorced him. (In the local history museum of Nizhni-Taguil you may still see her picture, a really wonderful piece of work by the painter Giuseppe Grassi.)

Thus Demidov senior, together with his son Akinfi Nikitich, crossed the Urals. He had a good nose for metal. If Aniki Stroganov may claim to be called the commercial conquistador of Siberia and Yermak Timofeyev its military conquistador, then the industrial conquistador of the country was Nikita Demidov. It was Nikita and Akinfi who began to industrialize the southern Altai rim of west Siberia and who founded the town of Barnaul in the woody steppe on the upper Ob; this place, once a Tatar *aul* named Barna, was a mining town from its birth. Akinfi founded the Kolyvano-Voskressensk and the Shulbinsk copper mines. He transferred former workers from his Ural works to the Altai, had more than four hundred farms assigned to him as feudal dependencies and besides this gained permission to settle "immigrant people" (with the exception of fugitive serfs, who had to be returned to their masters) round about his copper mines as "industrial serfs" and to supply his iron works with regular slave labour.

These Demidovs were no ordinary large-scale employers but rather industrial patriarchs in their full power and terror. They harnessed their industry to the ready-made system of feudal coercion, erected factories on the rich soil of serfdom, and the whole system dovetailed together wonderfully

well—for them. For where was it decreed that feudal service, or socage, should be performed only *on* the earth and not *under* the earth as well, and in smelting furnaces? Demidov sent his peasants to work not in the fields but in the mines and foundries. He bent the stiff necks, crippled the upright backs. Witnesses of that time testify that the once freeborn and now enslaved Siberians, broken and sapped by the iron yoke, were turned into poor and luckless beings, great children who could no longer grasp what was going on around them. They had come into the country as colonists, as colonizers; they had themselves had a hand in the subjugation of the Tatars, and then one fine day they were “enthralled” by someone they had never seen before, bought and sold like cattle on the market. After the dreadful years and decades they had spent under the yoke of the Demidovs, the enslaved population had sunk so deep in their helpless and hopeless bitterness that their whole life was an abyss of despair. The naked horror of old Russia stared out of their bloodshot eyes, out of the eyes of their overdriven horses. Their days and nights were filled with straining, aching, sinew-cracking journeys to and fro through swamp and woodland with heavy wet tree trunks weighing on their shoulders; a hungry eternity of excruciating misery between the winter frosts and the blazing heat of the furnaces; empty stomachs, blows of the knout and shouts of the slave-driver in the dark mines which were their daily grave. Anyone who complained was thrown into heavy chains. Anyone who ran away was overtaken by riders and bloodhounds and flogged to death. But it was not this which gave the tsarist cabinet the occasion which it sought to

confiscate the Altai works; it was the long years of evasion of taxes and the fact that Demidov had kept secret great deposits of silver from which he hoped to reap a profit for himself without rendering to the tsar the things which were the tsar's. In 1747, after the death of Akinfi, the whole mining district of the Altai was made part of the crown domains by decree of the Empress Catherine.

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

3

The old German professor Johann Georg Gmelin, whom we have already mentioned, visited the Kuznetsk basin just two hundred years ago and his "Siberian Diary" contains many curious entries which it is interesting to read at the present day. The following entry was written on September 19, 1734, in a small hut in Kuznetsk; it refers to the Tatar inhabitants of west Siberia:

It may thus be conceived that these Peoples do live in the most utter Darkness of their Understanding; and their unhappy Situation is to be seen from the whole Manner in which they do conduct themselves; and in my Estimation, we, who are acquainted with a better Life, can have no more convincing Proof of the Goodness which God hath vouchsafed us than when we contemplate the Condition of such unhappy Peoples.

Another and somewhat longer entry, also from the late summer of 1734, may be given in full since it is in some sort a document relating to the pre-history of the Urals-Kuznetsk Combine:

Kolyvano-Voskresenskie Zavody

August 27, 1734

In the year 1725 *Demiedoff* received the first Samples of Ore, and some Neues advertising him of the Place where it had been found, from certain fugitive Peasants who had taken up their Abode on the *Ob*, having come to these Parts to hunt the Deer; and after that he had constrained the Mining *Collegio* to give him Letters-Patent in order to examine the Land and to lay out an Iron Works, he did cause several Investigations to be made in the year 1726 and in 1727 he laid out a *Zavode* on the *Kolyvanka Gora*, which *Zavode* he transposed in the following year and in 1729 to the Spot where it now stands. It lies in the Mountains, and has for its defence a Fortress of four Bastions surrounded by a Rampart and a Ditch. Without the Fortress, toward the southwest, is a *Sloboda*, or Settlement, and to the northeast is the Iron Works, all of which is inclosed by an *Ostrog* or Palisade. Within the Fortress live the Commanders and Iron Workers. The main Works consist of five smaller Works. In the first, there are five arched Furnaces and a copper Hammer; in the second is a refining Hearth, a smelting Furnace and a Stamps to pound the Salt; in the third the Tinsplating is done and the Copper is treated; in the fourth there are five Smithies whose Bellows can be worked only by Hand; in the fifth is a Saw Mill and a Coal Work. The Workers in the Iron Works have in part been sent here from the *Catherineburg* Works and in part from the *Nevyansky* Works. But the Workers in the Mine are for the most part Peasants from various Regions who

come here to earn the Head Tax which they must pay to the Crown; therefore, when they have earned this Money, they do mostly withdraw to their Native Haunts, whereby they do somewhat hinder the Managing of the Work. *Demiedoff* has indeed laid out certain Villages on the River *Charysh*; but these are inhabited by only forty or fifty Men, whereas, if the Work is to go well, at least eight hundred are required. For the Defence of the Place one hundred *Slujivye*, or Horse-Soldiers, have been sent to *Demiedoff* out of *Kuznetsk*, to whom he pays the Wage which the Tsar is wont to pay.

The learned professor concludes his account by saying:

It is to be hoped that this whole Neighbourhood between the *Irtish* and the *Ob* is so full of the most costly Ores that, even if the Work be mightily pressed forward, nevertheless several Centuries may pass before this Treasure is exhausted. Whereby it must be regarded as a crowning Mercy that in these Parts there is no need to lay out costly Mines with costly Machines. The Ores do all lie on the Surface of the Earth, and the Mine which goes ten Fathoms beneath the upper Crust of the Soil is a rarity in these Parts.

How industry and Christianity invade a country hand in hand also appears from the learned professor's writings. So I will once more give Professor Gmelin the floor and let him tell us how the Tatars were baptized in Siberia, how their infidel souls were "incorporated" in the holy Russian empire. He is speaking of the Tatars in the region of Tomsk:

Ust-Kemchuk, December 2, 1734.

Their former Religion was approximately the same as that of the other heathen Tatars. They knew nothing of God save that when something had been stolen from them they used to say: God will find out the Thief. When Anyone among them died, they devoured the dead Man's Horse and sacrificed the Hide to the Devil. They buried their Dead, and all Persons who were at the Burial did spring, when they came back from the Grave, through a blazing Fire, in order that Death might not follow after them, since in their Opinion he must be afraid of Fire. . . .

When the Archbishop came into these Parts, he caused all People to be brought together, whereby some did come willingly, but the more Part were driven by the Dragoons whom he had brought with him. Since all these Tatars have their Abode on the *Chulym* River, the Neighbourhood is most convenient for Baptism; for those who did not willingly consent to be baptized were driven by force into the Stream, and when they came back, a Cross was hung around their Necks; then was their Baptism compleat. Now in order that the People might be kept steadfast in their new Religion, a Church was speedily built for them in the next Year in *Sarbichakovy Yurti* and provided with a Russian Pope. But those ones who live higher up the *Chulym* are sent to worship in the Church at *Moleskoi Ostrog*. This much is certain, that the People do not have the least notion of the Christian Religion and believe that the Essence of it is that they should wear Crosses, make the customary

sign of the Cross, go to Church, have their Children baptized, take only one Wife, refrain from all those Meats which they did formerly eat, such as the Flesh of Horses and Squirrels, and keep the Russian Fasts. Each one in his Hut has a Picture before which he says the customary Prayer of Lord have Mercy on me. More cannot be expected of them because the Russian Popes by whom they should be taught, not knowing their Language, cannot talk with them. Perhaps another cause is that no careful Choice of Popes is made; for it is rumoured that by their Life and Behaviour they do not set the Tatars a good Example. For the present, it is enough that it has gone as far as this; the Tatars call themselves Christians; and perhaps it may one day please God that they shall learn what a real Christian is.

Thus for Gmelin. The picture he draws is admirably clear. If the archbishop and his horde of Cossack dragoons and dissolute priests could not be reckoned real Christians, what was to be thought of the Demidovs and their slave-drivers? In reality, Gmelin's wish was granted in the moment when the Tatars driven with knouts to their icy baptism in the river, climbed up the bank with chattering teeth and learnt to wear the cross. This first lesson must have been sufficiently enlightening for them. And in subsequent times they were to have ample opportunity of learning "what a real Christian is." Even today the saddest songs and remembrances of all those Eastern peoples whom the revolution has liberated are deeply imbued with this tragic experience.

After the factories of Kolyvano-Voskressensk and the Altai region had been transferred to the administration of the imperial cabinet, the whole district on the banks of the upper Irtysh and the Ob were declared a special district and the hereditary property of the Russian tsar. The imperial district originally had no definite frontiers; it comprised a large part of southwest Siberia, including the Kuznetsk basin. The peasants inhabiting this district had henceforward to pay a head tax to the tsar besides their feudal dues or to work off both of these in the mines and iron works of his Imperial Highness. Convicts, exiles, heretics, Polish prisoners and Buryats were harnessed to work. Finally in 1761 Elizabeth issued a decree proclaiming serfdom over the whole crown district; however it proved impossible to put this decree fully into effect. At the same time it was decreed that a thousand men were to be recruited every year from the rest of Siberia to help in the mines. The Siberians fled in bands to the mountain fastnesses and forests. In many places they took up arms and offered stubborn resistance.

The Siberian population, who had with great pains and sacrifices cultivated the virgin soil, built roads and bridges, made the first pits and quarries in the mountains and thus attracted the attention of the robbers from Greater Russia, resisted bitterly. The old rebellious heretics cursed the order of the Petersburg "Antichrist." In their desperation they even went so far as to demand "the deposing of the authorities who are driving us from our land and plaguing us with strange works." This meant noth-

ing more nor less than to demand the deposition of the tsars!

In the more accessible regions resistance was quickly broken and the order of things restored which conformed to the spirit of Russian serfdom and the requirements of a metal industry which was being artificially fostered on the borders of the empire. The double-headed eagle only took the people of the Altai faster in its claws. The administration of the mines and works was entrusted exclusively to tried and trusted soldiers who constituted their own judicial and police authorities. All males from the age of seven until they were past working age were obliged to work in the mines. In 1849 a thirty-five year period of service was established as the rule. This period was later reduced to twenty-five years, but meanwhile the work had become so much more intense and difficult that only a few of the mine slaves outlived this "reduced" period of service. The worn-out men, like the wretched horses they drove, would collapse at their work, and even blows were powerless to make them stand up again. Twelve hours daily in the pit, for the most part in badly ventilated air, often knee-deep in water, or in the gas-infested heat of the smelting furnaces—twenty-five years of this was too much even for the giants of Siberia. Fortunate were those who were employed only in logging, road building, or carting ore and coal! It goes without saying that with this Asiatic system of forced labour the Siberian mining industry, despite its primitive technique, brought great profits to the owners. The chief metals to be mined were copper, lead, silver and gold. Those who visit palaces, treasuries and museums today and admire the old Pharaoh-like

culture of St. Petersburg in all its splendour—it is a splendour to which such precious metals as copper, lead, silver and gold greatly contribute—may think of the Altai mines and the serfs who worked them, their bloody tumors and bent backs, their hands twisted like claws in the mud and earth, their groans and curses.

When the reform of 1861 brought with it the “emancipation” of the Russian peasantry, the system of serfdom with mine police and courts-martial was abolished, but the “emancipated” peasants had to pay such a huge rent for their few acres of land that they had no choice but to return to the mines as wage labourers. After the reform the policy pursued with regard to rent and taxes was calculated to guarantee industry cheap labour power. But the calculation miscarried. Through many generations the mines had made themselves the objects of such hellish hatred that the Siberians as a rule preferred a hundred times rather to eke out the hungriest existence as peasants on a tiny plot of land, to live the needy life of hunters in the pathless mountain gorges than to work in the mines. They preferred it even though the miserable wages began to increase kopek by kopek, without however, exceeding the level of colonial wages (for western Siberia was nothing but a colony, and in colonies labour power must be cheap).

Anyhow it was all over now with the “prosperity” of the Altai industry. The ore mines seemed to be exhausted. The forest had been recklessly destroyed. The former journeymen of the mines would no longer do feudal service for nothing. And the once princely profits were eaten up by the “high” wages. Technical backwardness now began to take its toll.

During the nineties of the last century one pit after another was closed, one furnace after another was extinguished. The imperial treasury leased out estates and hunting grounds for a song and laid out its capital in different regions—in the Lena gold-fields and beyond Lake Baikal.

Capitalism transferred the centre of gravity from non-ferrous metals to iron and steel, from the Altai to the Kuznetsk Basin, from state industry to private industry.

The new epoch gave gold for iron. But the iron demanded coal.

5

Some time ago the trust of the Urals-Kuznetsk Combine and the Leningrad Academy of Science called for volunteers to perform some extensive work in the central archives at Moscow. On several days off the student youth of Moscow organized *subbotniks* to do some regular excavations in these archives. They burrowed their way through piles of papers left behind by the tsarist "Imperialist Administration for Mines and Iron Works East of the Urals."

The Marx-Engels Institute, in which I was then working, also sent volunteers. For a whole day several hundred of us rummaged in the musty files and heaps of papers which had slept through the Revolution, all numbered and labelled in their ossified stratifications.

Applications, ratifications, receipts, petitions, notices, reports, informers' letters, excerpts from minutes. Great stamps and crackling seals. Two-headed eagles. Resolutions scribbled in pencil on the margins of finely penned papers. *Re* leasing of land. *Re* deforestation. *Re* drainage of estates. *Re* regula-

tion of water supply for gold-washing concerns. Applications for concessions to the cabinet of His Imperial Highness. Petitions for remitting of taxes. In March 1915 the St. Petersburg Lord Chamberlain asks the imperial porcelain manufacturers for earthen easter eggs and crockery—"but not too expensive"—to be given as presents to the children of junior officials. In 1916 the workers at Bargusinsk, Olekminsk, Vitimsk in the Siberian forest come out on strike. Orders: cut off food supplies. Money and articles of value to be removed at once. All responsibility rejected for the consequences of famine. A mine manager reports: The workers threaten to seize the gold mines. Resolution: At the slightest attempt—open fire. Send up reinforcements from Minussinsk. A spectre from the past looms up—the Irkutsk cavalry captain Treshchenkov, who on April 4, 1912, gave the command which led to the bloody massacre on the Lena goldfields—270 strikers killed, 240 wounded on the spot. This cavalry officer has a dashing signature. To the bold letters in which he signs his name he appends a long tail-like flourish, which looks like a gallows with many nooses on it....

The cracking paper is growing yellow. Thousands of great and lesser dramas are told of here. The paper exudes a vapour of ink, sweat and tears. Gold, iron, religion, lead, blood. Our task was to find everything which related to unexplored reserves of ore. We had to dig for metal in the paper catacombs of the central archives.

Besides the obedient reports submitted by private gold-seekers, there were many notices strewn here and there about traces of metal noted near such and such a stream, mountain, sunken road,

rock or gulley. These reports, signed by some clerk on behalf of peasant so-and-so in such and such a district or village, were to have been sorted out in the court cabinet and sent on to their proper destination higher up. But this complicated process generally lasted years or even decades. Thus the Revolution overtook the jog-trot nag of officialdom. And the student youth of Moscow, without any bureaucracy, accomplished in a few hours of work the task of sifting and sorting, with which the tsarist officials had been unable to cope, because their attention was claimed to an increasing extent by other cares—how to stop the mouths of the lower officials with porcelain easter eggs and how to combine most effectually the force of hunger and weapons against Siberian strikers....

The Siberian foresters and mountaineers always knew how to search for ore and were well informed about it. And today the geological pioneer of socialism is penetrating into the wilderness on the tracks of many a peasant or hunter now long dead.

6

It is a pity that Siberia is so badly run. The choice of governor-generals is especially unhappy. Siberia has a great future.... The hostile Russian government, which does everything by violence, with the stick, is not capable of giving that living incentive which might urge Siberia forward with American speed.—(Alexander Herten 1855).

The Siberians are a race apart—smelling of damp hay and earth, bronzed, fair-haired and strong as grizzlies. They are for the most part the descendants of those Russian peasant troops who took the eastward road in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at the heels of Yermak Timofeyev the

Conqueror and the later Cossack atamans. After the conquest they settled down as farmers in western and eastern Siberia, later mixing their blood with the masses of deported colonists, heretics, fugitives and exiles, and they always remained a self-willed, undisciplined element. They are a healthy, clever and upstanding people with limbs as strong as tree-trunks. They were never intimidated like some types of peasants in old Russia. You can see by their very appearance that the great majority of them never had to suffer from serfdom or landlords. With the exception of these unlucky districts which were directly subjected to the arbitrary rule of the Demidovs and Romanovs, Siberia has never had a feudal class, has never had its own native nobility. The tsarist soldiers and officers were regarded as a hostile army of occupation with whom the population lived perpetually in a state of veiled war. The mighty force of vast distances in a thinly populated country, the custom of bearing arms and of facing dangers—all this has made the Siberian tough and pugnacious. Besides this, being generally a heretic, the long arm of the church did not reach him. The distant villages would only be visited by the priest twice or three times a year when he dealt out indulgences, marriage blessings, baptisms and extreme unctions in advance, otherwise leaving the people in peace.

But the man who did not leave them in peace was the bureaucrat, the tsarist *chinovnik*. The vast spaces of Siberia, which gave the peasant his freedom, also unleashed the evil spirit of the tsarist official. He felt himself free from all control. It was a long way from St. Petersburg to Siberia! Even the tsar's wrath was of no avail against thieves

in official uniform, and if maybe a new administrator showed signs of energy, if a cross-headed governor made efforts to do away with the omnipotent bribery system, the only response was the echo of mocking laughter throughout the whole country. Everyone took bribes and everyone was ready to give them. He who did not take bribes was a fool; and he who did not give them was a lost man.

Once a curious fellow named Speransky took over the governorship at Tobolsk, and it entered into his head to regulate official abuses by introducing the collegiate principle in the government of western Siberia. As though it mattered whether the stealing was done individually or collectively! A few hundred old rogues were dismissed and an equal number of new rogues were installed in their places. For a time the provincial police were so intimidated that high functionaries whose conscience was uneasy paid the peasants hush money. But before three years passed, the bribes were again flowing with interest into the old ramifying channels. On another occasion a west Siberian Don Quixote, a certain general Velyaminov, tilted for two years against the windmills of bureaucracy, during which time the big bribes reduced themselves to small tips. The obstinate man only just saved his neck; he beat a hasty retreat into private life.

In a public library at Novosibirsk, climbing up a ladder to examine some of the old books on the shelves, I was surprised and delighted to come upon some of the works of the great revolutionary Alexander Hertzen. I opened one of the volumes at the title "Prison and Exile." There I found a wonderful chapter about the Siberian governors, from which I could not tear myself away. For a

whole hour I stood there on the ladder, reading and reading, oblivious of all else.

I did not know before, for example, that Paul Pestel, the most resolute and important of the Decembrists, the founder and leader of the radical-democratic Southern Society, who was hanged in the Peter and Paul fortress six months after the suppression of the December rising of 1825—that this famous hero of the revolution was the son of one of the most bloody and atrocious governor-generals of western Siberia. Herten calls old Pestel a “veritable Roman proconsul,” a raging robber chieftain who subjected the whole country to systematic acts of plundering. Through his spies and informers he contrived to cut off his province completely from Russia; he allowed no letter to get across the Urals unopened, and woe to anyone who had the audacity to make any critical observation about Pestel’s methods of government. Not only small fry but even influential merchants, members of the First Guild, were thrown into prison by him without more ado; he kept them in chains for years on end and tortured them without mercy. Insubordinate judges and officials he dispatched to live for years in the desert wastes and marshes, and he dealt out floggings to the peasantry with a lavish hand. The people endured it all for a long while, until finally a small trader from Tobolsk made up his mind to visit the all-highest tsar in person and to tell him of the arbitrary rule of his servants and of the misery of his children. Since the good man was justifiably afraid to take the direct route, he managed to get through to Kyakhta in Mongolia and from here crossed the Siberian frontier with a tea caravan. In St. Petersburg he learned that the tsar

was in his summer residence. And so, in the green park of Tsarskoye Selo, the poor pilgrim at last found his opportunity to throw himself at the feet of Alexander I and to hand him his petition. It is reported that Alexander was so shocked, so astounded by all the horrors of which he read in this petition that he ordered the man to be sent for again and had a long talk with him. Then he dismissed him saying: "Now, my friend, go home in peace. The matter will be adjusted." "Your Majesty," answered the man, "I cannot go home. Rather let me be imprisoned in a fortress. My conversation with your majesty will not remain a secret—I am a doomed man." Alexander shuddered before the incriminating force of this appeal for help and turned to Miloradovich, the governor of St. Petersburg: "You will answer to me for the safety of this man." "Then permit me," answered Miloradovich, "to shut him up in my house." And there the citizen of Tobolsk remained until the matter had been settled.

But old Pestel himself lived almost the whole time in St. Petersburg—just like the old Roman pro-consuls who did not spend their time amid the boredom of the provinces they governed, but preferred to live amid the voluptuous pleasures of Rome. Thanks to his presence and his personal connections, but thanks above all to his readiness to share the booty with fellow-criminals, the old fox knew how to forestall unpleasant happenings of every kind. In addition to this, he had his own system of spies and informers and was well informed about what went on in the remotest corner of his distant domain. (This once provided Count Rostopchin with the material for a witty remark which he let

fall when dining with the tsar in Pestel's company. Alexander asked, pointing out of the window. "Look there, what is that black fleck on the church tower yonder?" "I can't make out, your majesty," said Rostopchin deprecatingly, "you must ask our friend Pestel here. He has wonderful eyes—he can see from here what is going on in Siberia.")

While the tsar was travelling abroad—he was staying at that time in Verona or Aix-la-Chapelle—the wise council of state decided, since after all it was a matter which concerned western Siberia, that the whole scandal of administrative corruption be referred to the consideration of governor-general Pestel himself, who was fortunately present at the time; he would soon adjust the matter. . . . Miloradovich, Mordvinov and several other counsellors objected to this proposal, which put the accused in the position of judge, and the matter was referred to the senate. The senate had its own special style of handling the scandals of higher dignitaries; it remained true to itself, did no damage to the arch-rogue Pestel and contented itself merely with assigning him a new sphere of operations. Meanwhile a lesser criminal, the civil governor of Tobolsk, Treskin, had to suffer all the more severely for the sins of his superior; he was relieved of his office, deprived of his rank and sent off to some unknown destination.

Of the arch-rogue Pestel it is also related that in the spring of 1826, just before the execution of his son, he visited the latter in the fortress to bid him farewell. Here, in the presence of all the assembled spies and gendarmes, he is said to have heaped curses and reproaches on his son, taking this appropriate occasion to prove once again his unbounded

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loyalty to the emperor. He concluded his paternal reproofs—somewhat belated as they were—with the question: “What were you really aiming at?” “Ah, father,” answered his son, “that cannot be told in a few words. But most certainly I wanted to have a republic in which men like you would be—not governors, but horse-butchers. . . .”

After Pestel, a general named Kaptsevich was sent to western Siberia as governor—a gouty grumpy old soldier with years of army service behind him, an evil-tempered old bag of bones. He sought to spread his distemper as far as possible over the whole country. He established “good order.” He regimented everything. If western Siberia under Pestel had been a prison, under Kaptsevich it became a barrack. He clothed outward life in uniform. He regulated the prices of the bazaars. For the rest, he allowed the old gang of bureaucrats to have their own way. Once his imperial highness desired to favour the province with a visit. At that time a tolerably good, broad and much frequented military highway led through the Perm district as far as the Urals, and Kaptsevich determined to have this highway extended through western Siberia in quick time, though the geological conditions there were far less favourable. Within three months the plan had been put into effect. Thousands and thousands of serfs were herded together from remote villages and forced to slave in the icy wind of early spring, in the bogs and standing water, till they dropped unconscious or were seized with cramp and bloody tumors. An epidemic of typhoid fever descended upon this army overnight and carried off at least a half of them. New serfs were forced to take their place, and the causeway was finished on time. It is

still to be seen to this day—this long awesome stretch of highway, built on human bones.

Old Pestel had been more "liberal" in this respect. He had been in the habit of recruiting masses of free Siberian artisans for construction work. And he paid them for the work they did—paid them with blows and imprisonment. If the chief of an artel of bricklayers or carpenters came to the representatives of the governor and humbly begged him to give him the wages for himself and his workers, he would receive the answer: "Haven't got any money just now, old fellow, not a damned kopek. Come in again later." And next time, more severely: "What, you again? You old ox! How often have I told you we have no money! Anyway your work's no good, not worth a damned kopek. Maybe you've taken on cobblers' apprentices in your artel, eh?" And the third time, after a month's interval, the furious official thunders as soon as the man appears: "What? Is it money you want, you impudent good-for-nothing? Money? You've only caused us losses with your cursed cobblers and now you come asking for money! Outside! You ought to be sent to jail!" And sure enough the free artisan gets sent to prison. How so? Very simple. The workers of his artel are forced to sue him for non-payment of wages, and he, who is responsible for paying them but is of course unable to do so, is put behind the bars as a common swindler, and there he stays until his men have scattered to the four winds and until he is cured of his sticklishness.

Western Siberia was a colony. And labour power must be cheap in the colonies.

It must always be remembered that this wonderfully rich stretch of country, forcibly delayed in its development for hundreds of years, was a colony—a military and commercial colony, a labour colony, a penal colony with governor-generals, gendarmes, mine overseers, mine police, prison and pit superintendants. Only then can we get an idea of the tremendous leap forward which history made here when with one revolutionary blow it set free the truly immeasurable productive forces of Siberia. It was as though the mainspring of some tremendous machine had been wound up almost to bursting point and was then suddenly let loose, literally shattering earth and air with its mighty onrush. The pitiful fuss and pother in the brief capitalist pre-history of this land of black diamonds was as nothing compared to this!

When, as we have said, after the collapse of the former “patriarchal” metal manufacture, the industrial centre of gravity was shifted from the Altai region to the Kuznetsk basin, the latter region was no longer a *terra incognita*, but neither could it as yet be described as the promised land.

The very first settlers here had found coal. They found it when they dug their wells, even while ploughing the fields. In 1768 Johann Peter Falk, the natural historian, on the way from Tomsk to Kuznetsk saw seams of coal on the surface as he went along the highway. No one had taken note of them. In his “remains,” published in St. Petersburg in 1785 (he himself committed suicide in 1773) we find a careful description of the coal deposits in the valley of the Tom. Friedrich August Gebler, a

German doctor in the Kolyvano-Voskressensk iron district; also mentions the Kuznetsk coal in his Altai sketches of 1830. Not until 1851 did the Altai factories send an expedition to investigate the Kuzbas coal. The expedition prospected a larger number of coal deposits, but, as luck would have it, they did not find the "pitchy" coal which they wanted for coking purposes. Nevertheless the imperial cabinet sunk one or two mines in Kolchugino, which however soon closed down.

Scores of years passed, and although scientific literature made ever more frequent mention of the wonderful coal of the Kuzbas, which in many places lay right on the surface of the ground, it was not until 1913 that a group of employers, supported by French capital, formed themselves into the "Kopikus" Company, which sunk mines in Kolchugino and Kemmerovo and commenced geological prospecting of the whole region. In 1917-18 the "Kopikus" Company transferred the scene of its prospecting work to the south of the basin. But at this point they were interrupted by the Civil War.

On April 7, 1919, the miners of Kolchugino, under the leadership of a strong fighting organization of the local Bolsheviks, commenced an armed uprising and took possession of the mining districts. Unable to establish connections with the troops of Red partisans operating in the northern Kuzbas, the rebels were very quickly overcome by Kolchak, and lost some four hundred fighters. The remainder withdrew into the mountains, crossed the Salair range and united with the Red Guard of Barnaul.

In the spring of 1920 after the counter-revolutionary armies of Kolchak had been smashed, the Soviet power energetically continued the interrupted work,

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concentrating its efforts on the point where the supplies of coal were most plentiful—in the Prokopyevsk district. The rich deposits of coal were probed and prospected in all directions, and in the same year the Red army of workers constructed the first galleries. The first Soviet year gave a yield of 24,000 tons. In 1922 a commission of scientists analysed the Prokopyevsk coal and found that it is better than the best sorts of coal previously known of in the world! Most of the seams yield first-class coking coal and certain sorts of coal were found which could be used for blast furnaces without previous coking.

CHAPTER SIX

PROKOPYEVSK, CITY OF COAL

“Goats Nibble Their Noses Black!”—Old Wegerich the Fighter—The Four-Metre Assignment—Germans Sink a Shaft—In the Club-room—How Höniger Did It—“I Don’t Know Much Russian But—” —A Cup of Tea With Julius—Höniger Meets an Ugly Customer—At the Coal Face—Old Wegerich’s Philosophy—A Meditative Letter—Pupils versus Teachers in Socialist Competition—How We Sang the International After the Meeting

CHAPTER SIX

PROKOPYEVSK, CITY OF COAL

I

Forty kilometres from the rim of the Ala-Tau mountain range, which rises above Kuznetskstroy, lies the pearl of the Kuzbas, the great pulsating heart of the coal organism—Prokopyevsk, the richest treasury of black diamonds in the world. The countryside is one of picturesque ugliness, like a tumorous caricature of a mountain landscape, a grotesque mountain scene.

Out of the undulating steppe jut six or seven hat-shaped excrescences, looking as though they



were made of rumpled fur with bald moth-eaten patches on it. All are ringed about with smaller hillocks, scarred and scored by zigzag clefts in the earth and black holes which look like craters or granite funnels.

When you stand on one of these protuberances, like the arched back of a cat, studded with Siberian steppe bushes and pitiful huddled copses—hummocks which consist of solid coal, of good hard pit coal which has lain here for thousands of milleniums heaped up, bent, twisted in thick seams—when you stand on one of the highest of these coal volcanoes, these craters in the earth have a terrifying effect, for veritable craters they are, startling in their nearness and alarming in their glaring nakedness. The sharp rims of the black yawning pits are avoided by everyone—even the goats who in other places skip lightly over the crevices, carefully shun these short cuts to the underworld and gingerly make their way round them when they come up in herds from the valley and wander over the slag-strewn hillocks.

You stand there and gaze down at the colliery towers, old and new, at the pit railway which disappears through a gate in the mountainside—seven tip-cars with a horse as locomotive....

But suddenly you feel a shock under your feet, the earth shakes beneath you, a clap of thunder echoes deep under the ground. What is it? A landslide?

"That's the blaster at work," says your companion in his deep voice. "Now count—one, two, three, four...." And eight times the thunder rolls through the mountain. Blasting operations are in progress in the central galleries.

There you stand, and the old collier Wegerich plunges his knotted stick with a forcible gesture into the crumbling earth.

"Lad, lad," he says, "take a good look around you. On this spot Adam emptied his coal box. Nowhere else in the world will you find such a splendid lot of good bituminous coal all together in one place. And all lying ready to hand—take a good look around and make your choice! Every peasant has his own mine here—that's what they say—and the goats nibble their noses black. But they kept it all a secret for eighty long years, the devils! Then the Kolchaks came and after them the Ramzins, the saboteurs, I can't remember all their names—the swindlers came when the thieves had gone and told us a pack of lies. The Kuzbas, they said—not worth discussing, purely local importance... Lad, lad!"

He pulls out his knotted stick and wedges it once more in the ground.

"In Germany it's a rarity to find a seam two metres thick, and when they hit upon a seam of coal three metres thick, they close down all the neighbouring pits. Here we're working on a seam of seventeen metres, and there's another one as thick as a six-story house—from 26 to 30 metres, sounds like a fairy-tale, doesn't it? Short wall cutting doesn't always pay here, we use the open cutting method. Look at those holes round about you—that's where we've taken out the coal in solid blocks, scooped it up with steam-navvies. There's more here than there is in the Donbas and in the Ruhr, more than in both together lies under these hillocks, take my word for it. D'you know how much there is here? Two hundred billion tons! You dig down two metres deep and the coal begins. One seam

on top of the other. Go on boring as deep as you please and still you'll find coal!"

Comrade Wegerich has been here longest of all the German miners in Prokopyevsk. When he strolls along the street on his days off in his slouch hat and in the Siberian bearskin which he does not leave off even in summer time, smoking his pipe and swinging his stick, you might easily take him for one of the local inhabitants, the senior member of the miners' settlement.

This place fits him as well as his bearskin. It is a quiet, pleasant spot, this settlement—much more peaceful to all appearances than roaring Kuznetsk-stroy. Rows of old wooden houses between the hills, with gardens laid out as neat as a chess-board, and the building of the mines management standing in the middle, a grey two-story house with a protruding stone wall beneath, almost like a hut for climbers in the high mountains.

This pleasant settlement stands upon coal, and one day the mysterious subterranean operations which are going on beneath it will shove away this terribly overcrowded little place like a house of cards—but there is no hint of this in its peaceful appearance now.

Nevertheless the far-sighted socialist plan provides for the future. A successor is being prepared for the overcrowded settlement. Six kilometres away from these hills of coal the foundations of a new town are being laid. It has already been mapped out and given its name—Tyrgan. In this new town every inhabitant is to have at least seven square metres elbowroom instead of the constricted space which he has today in Prokopyevsk.

Wegerich indeed is quite at home here—the man

who now speaks several Siberian languages and has only once crossed the Urals since the days when he was a prisoner of war. You would take him for a Siberian now, although I once saw an old photograph showing him, without his beard and his fur, in a stand-up collar with a tie and white gloves. And he likes to tell of his youth in Upper Silesia and how it was exactly January 1, 1900, when he was promoted from horse-boy to lamp-filler in the Anna Mine. Ages ago! But Wegerich's life story has other pages in it too—guerilla fighting against the Japanese, against Ataman Semyonov, then against Kolchak—organizing international detachments of partisans in the Far East—wounded three times—and finally how he took part in a regular naval battle on the River Irtysh and captured three big tugboats of English mines and French cigarettes from the Kolchak bandits—and how, when Omsk was captured, he addressed the Czechoslovakian prisoners in German and appealed to them to join the Red Guard. . . . Lad, lad!

A splendid, courageous comrade and a storm brigadier. Why is it that so many of the German colliers don't get on with him any too well?

Only yesterday, up in the new barracks by the water tower, where the Germans with their families occupy three new clean houses, we noticed that the atmosphere was charged with thunder, that the workers were at loggerheads with one another, and the subject of their argument was—coal, metres, time, clauses in the agreement, and Wegerich. What have they got against uncle Wegerich? That he speaks Russian fluently? That he is a foreman and earns more pay than the man at the face? That he possesses prestige with the management? All this,

unfortunately, does not make the others friendly towards him. Not even the little group of German Party comrades. But the last straw has been the story of the four-metre assignment.

The Germans are sinking several shafts for a giant mining enterprise to be named the "Gigant-Koksovaya," which is to give an annual output of three and a half million tons in the near future. This mine will be without its counterpart in the world.

The German miners have had a hard time of it fighting against quicksands and springs of water. Now the main pit has for the most part been coated with concrete and the galleries are being blasted with dynamite at the level of 50 and 100 metres. The rate of this advance through the sandstone—an advance which will lead the miners to the richest seams in the whole region—will be the decisive factor for victory or defeat at Prokopyevsk, for victory or defeat of the Kuznetsk plan.

On the basis of all the experience of the Russian brigades, an assignment suited to the conditions of the German workers has been calculated—four metres in four six-hour shifts.

Wegerich was representative of the German miners on the technical commission. He and no other was the man who put forward the counterplan of four metres as against the original plan of Varlamov, the mine manager—3.2 metres.

"Impossible, can't be done," such was the opinion of the majority of the German miners, and they cut short all objections with the answer: "The blasting material does not give full effect, the blasters are untrained, the pumps get choked up with sand every day, the ventilators are weak, much explosive

gas is left behind in the galleries, the stone is left lying, the new scrapers which ought to remove the rubble are not fit to be used, and then we have to stand in water and the rubber boots are worn out."

The barrack in which the office is situated is full of voices raised in argument. When silence falls, you can hear the buzz of the flies, hear them knocking against the window panes with a dull thud. On the walls hang maps, many-coloured charts, geological cross-sections of the strata.

Wegerich draws his belt tight under his coat and shoves his pipe into the corner of his mouth: "That's the way we used to talk to the bosses in Silesia—yes, complain about boots and ventilation. But here I should say that we are masters of the pit ourselves, and we want to get things running smoothly ourselves first. The assignment—the assignment," he says and his little bird-like eyes glitter, "why, that's the plan, that's our hold-fast, and we have got to accept it. But talking won't do—no, that's the way!" And he brought down his fist on the table so that the wood groaned.

"Yes but didn't we write in about what was wrong in good time?" one of them asks.

"And I put some questions to the factory committee," another adds excitedly.

"Three metres twenty and not an inch more!" throws in someone else loudly.

Wegerich raises his voice: "That's not the way to storm fortresses. If you can't trust yourselves, then the revolution cannot trust you either. You ought to see the way the Russians fight for the plan!"

And two young miners back him up with a shout:

"That's right! Bravo, Wegerich, that's enough! What the Russians can do, we can do too!"

Both of them seize hold of Wegerich, one by the left arm, the other by the right, and jostle him laughing out of the stuffy room.

2

"You did a good job that time," said Julius R., who had told us the story of the four-metre assignment, to the two Komsomols, Roll and Mannik. "We always back up Wegerich whatever the matter is. There's a man for you—he's got a head on his shoulders. He knows what we are fighting for here. If only he didn't try to put everything on such a world-historical scale...."

The large yard of the colliery building, with its trackways, coaling platforms, locomotives, heaps of materials and guards, lay behind us. We entered a small building which had once been a warehouse and was now a cloakroom for the miners working in the first pit of the "Gigant." Here we put on waterproof rubber clothes, jackets, trousers, top-boots and the slouch-hat—called the "Capichon"—looking like a lifeboatman's "sou-wester," coming down over the neck to keep out the water.

"Yes, that's Wegerich," Roll continued the conversation while we all dressed ourselves and tightly buckled up the heavy folds of our clothes. "He's a darned good fellow and he's gone through hell with the Siberians. If only he were a bit more diplomatic...."

Mannik opened his mouth to answer and was apparently going to contradict him, but at that moment the door of the shower-room flew open with a bang—it was the room in which the colliers washed

the stone and coal dust from their bodies after work—and a man of middle height stood before us stark naked. His body was white, but his head and hands were black as soot. He was agitated.

"The water's run out again, comrades," he shouted in German. "That's no way! Where is the old bath-woman? If I come home again like this, my Gertrude will take me for a nigger!"

Suddenly he notices that a stranger is present and, forgetting the comic side of the situation, introduces himself politely: "Foreman Höniger's the name—excuse me, please. . . ."

His handshake leaves a trace of black coal-dust on my hand. Julius gives me a push forward, and, clumsy as divers in our heavy rubber uniform, we clamber up the stairs of the colliery tower to the platform above. Roll and Mannik briefly relate the story of foreman Höniger, who, greatly doubting, came to Siberia as a specialist and mining instructor because "he had nothing left to lose in Germany but his insomnia."

"But when he'd once arrived and had seen Prokopyevsk from underneath, he came out of the mine like a man born again and slept nine hours at a stretch the very first night. He wished he were at least fifteen years younger; he wanted to spend his whole life digging into this magnificent coal. For coal like this can't be found anywhere else."

The girl operating the elevator, who is fastened to the bridge by a safety belt, releases the lever.

The cage sways, quivers a moment and then drops smoothly to the fifty-metre level.

Through clouds of steam, dimly lighted by electric lamps, we can discern shadowy figures at work. Standing on the iron platform and gliding down-

ward between the walls of black, moist, dripping stone, the grunting and chugging of the steam pump beats upon our ears. You have to "acclimatize yourself" to the hellish—really hellish—din down here, and soon your eye, too, learns to pierce the heavy atmosphere. It is like being in a steam bath. The vapour is like a hot cloth laid on your skin—thick and palpable. Dark trickles of water stream down the concrete walls. In one corner the drops fall thick and fast as rain. There are puddles of standing water bridged over with planks, under which the water squirts and splashes as we make our way along the gallery. The little stream Aba, which, half dried up, winds its way through Prokopyevsk in a chain of muddy puddles, seems to have sent its waters by underground channels into the mine.

From the bottom of the pit two broad galleries lead off to the right and left, their ceilings secured

by beams, iron arches and clamps. This is the starting point of the main arteries of the future giant mining enterprise.

Ahead of us, at the end of the vapour-laden blind alley, four or five dripping figures in rubber suits can be seen toiling before a wall of rock. With powerful electric drills they are boring eight or ten deep holes in the rock. Their damp clothes glisten in the light of the electric bulbs.



They lean with all their weight against the palpitating whirring machines, and it looks as though the borers were drilling into their chests, not into the rock wall.

We recognize one of them as Comrade Varmalov. He greets us and eagerly explains the plan of work—to lengthen the tunnel at the rate of four metres per day. From a leather case, hung around his waist, he pulls out a damp blueprint and shouts in our ears: “Four hours’ drilling and a half an hour’s blasting. Immediately after the blasting the scrapers get to work. No interval—you see, we have exhausters, gas-absorbers and scrapers! The broken stone is cleared away. The brigade starts placing pit-props without losing a moment’s time. Four blastings in twenty-four hours.” He turns over the blueprint and points to exact columns of figures with the point of his pencil: “We’re advancing to the coal at four metres a day.”

The scraper, a plate of metal on rollers taking up the whole width of the gallery, is cleared of rubble. The blaster advances. A cluster of blasting charges in waterproof capsules dangles at his belt. Carefully he detaches three, five, eight of the charges from the bundle and smoothly inserts them into the holes that have been bored. Then he pushes a wad in after them. Sudden silence. You can hear the dripping of the water. He gives a sign, and striking a match, lights the impregnated fuses, without hurrying, one after the other, so that afterwards he can distinguish the detonations and count them separately; for woe to one of the miners if he strikes his pick against the dynamite charge which has remained unexploded by accident!

Hissing and showering sparks like rockets, the

fuses burn their way into the rock wall. The streamlets of water trickle and splash, the fireworks hiss and spit. We grow restive. We are getting nervous.

What is the man doing? Here we stand only five paces from the rock wall which is just going to burst into smoke and flame, and nobody seems inclined to go. How many seconds have we got left? How long will it last?

At length the blaster gives a sign. We move away after him, bringing up the rear. I step out with an eerie feeling in my back, as though some very disagreeable person were at my heels, wanting to clap me on the shoulder, to grip me by the arm. . . . Involuntarily I hasten my steps, paying no heed to the calm, even talk of the blaster. The cage is not there. It has already taken up two loads of men. My nerves are on edge now.

The cage comes humming down. The platform quivers under our feet. We stand close together, a cluster of dripping figures in rubber suits. As we glide upwards, we get a glimpse of the fifty-metre level—all the plant has been carefully covered up.

Up above, in the colliery tower, we stand waiting on the bridge. Two endless minutes. Three minutes. There was plenty of time after all. At last comes the dull thud of two explosions in the depths of the pit. You hear them with your whole body. The pit echoes like a giant concrete bell. The tower seems to sway slightly. The atmospheric pressure passes through us like a gust of wind. A third explosion. . . . Then a long interval. And then again, detonation after detonation in rapid sequence. The blaster counts out loud, each time with a nod of his head. The number tallies. He has done his job well.

Now a couple of ventilators are set to work. In

a wailing chorus of chromatic scales they begin to suck the explosion gases out of the pit. This entire musical performance, from the drum-like thud of the explosions to the wailing symphony of the ventilators, is repeated four times a day—once after each of the four shifts. And each time the result must be one metre's advance along the whole breadth of the gallery. This plan requires, besides good blasting material and good work on the part of the blaster, one more factor in addition—shock-work by all the forty men in the miners' brigade, storm tempo in drilling, clearing the gallery, removing the rubble and placing the props. The factors determining victory are complicated as in warfare. Dynamite plus enthusiasm.

Half an hour later we are standing again on the hundred-metre level, in the corridor where the explosion has taken place.

How everything has changed! Swirls of bluish smoke are still rising from the clefts and fissures in the wall of rock. There is an acid smell. The water is coming in faster. It is trickling down over the concrete wall, spurting from the taps and pipes, dripping from the roof. The pump is still grunting in its corner, the lamps are burning steadily on the planking, but the steamy atmosphere is now laden with gas and a heap of rock has fallen over the scraper. The sharp-cornered pieces of fresh sandstone are charred black in places. In the steam, in the sharp biting smell of the gases, in the maddening din of the pumps, of the ventilators, of the pneumatic hammers and pick-axes, the scraper—a moving mountain of rubble—rolls away, drawn by steel cables, drowning all other sounds with its thundering noise.

Our comrades are already standing on the scaffolding, hammering the walls smooth, building partitions of planks, placing pit-props and stretching iron bands under the arches. They have thrown off their jackets, coats and shirts, and are working half naked in a warm rain of dripping water.

I ask one of them why he does not wear his rubber suit. He has nothing on but a pair of bathing trunks. His moustaches are dripping wet, the ends hanging down, and it is hard to say if they are moist from water or from sweat.

"I would sooner wrap myself in blotting paper," he shouts in my ear, and I can feel myself that my diver's suit is soaked full of water. The water is rising in my boots and dripping down my neck: if I raise up my arm, I get the sleeves full of water at once. . . . I feel myself getting heavier and heavier. No, these "special clothes" are not nearly "special" enough!

The men are swearing hard, but the noise swallows up their voices. However, they don't relax their efforts. Through the steam and vapour of this moist inferno I catch a glimpse of the heaving athletic shoulders of Comrade Julius, dripping wet moisture. He is the leader of the brigade. He sets an example to the others. None of them lags behind. I recall one of Julius's sayings: "The main thing is personal example." Yes, down here our colliers are working like tigers; they are in their element in the pit, and even two or three of them, who have raised their voices against the increased assignment and the shock tempo of work, are carried along heart and soul by the collective enthusiasm of the rest.

We are sitting in the Red Corner of the German workers' group. Kurt, the manager of the library and the newspaper table, pushes over a no longer new number of the *Rote Fahne* in our direction, together with some back numbers of *Welt am Abend* and the *Ruhr-Echo*. We take a look at the books. It is quite a respectable workers' library "for Siberian conditions" (as Kurt puts it).

At the window, surrounded by German comrades,



sits Arnold, a Jewish Komsomol from Odessa who has worked in the Donbas and was "mobilized" when 1,000 young workers were called upon for work in the Kuzbas: that was two or three years ago when the pit was still in its infancy. Arnold understands a little German, so he is a frequent and welcome guest in the German workers' club. He is a big black-haired fellow, fiery and excitable, his nostrils quivering with eagerness and exertion, as he laboriously translates some telegrams from the latest Russian papers for the benefit of the German miners. The telegrams refer to Germany, and the miners listen with tense interest; they nod approval and help him out when he runs short of words. They often have to guess the exact meaning from the Komsomol's broken German, and they help Arnold with a kind of friendly impatience which has something pitying about it and visibly hurts his feelings.

On other occasions the translating is done for them by the interpreter or by Comrade Wegerich, but at this moment the interpreter has left them for a little time and Wegerich is down the mine, working the night shift.

Everything that concerned Germany was a matter of burning importance for the miners. There were some for whom the fate of their former home-country represented something foreign, something from which they were cut off forever by crisis and unemployment. Others concentrated their whole attention on the development of the revolutionary struggle, on the great united Red front against the rise of fascism, and they longed to be back in the thick of the class struggle, in contrast to which Prokopyevsk and the whole Kuzbas *seemed* nothing but a peaceful idyll; in their minds' eye they saw

strike-pickets squatting by night before iron gates, they saw demonstrations of unemployed pass ghost-like along the streets, they heard the already half-forgotten clatter of hoofs of the mounted police on the wet asphalt, the barking voice of the police officer in the factory yard, the sound of the window being slammed to in unemployment offices and the suppressed passion of the speeches at meetings. But there was also a third category of comrades; these had reached the point where they were conscious of having found a *new home*, and this consciousness helped them to understand rightly their duty in the Soviet country. They saw that the Kuzbas was not by any means a peaceful idyll, that the same great class struggle was raging here as they had known in Germany—the struggle whose front runs through all countries and which splits the whole world into two halves—one of them old and decaying, giving birth to fascism in its poisonous corruption, the other young, living and growing, where the proletarians rally round their class in the fire of struggle—a world which is approaching its completion in mighty five-year strides in this first socialist country.

There were many conflicting feelings and currents of opinion among the German miners at Prokopyevsk—in their life, work and struggle. And this held true not only here in the Kuzbas but also—with surprising regularity—in Moscow, in Tula, in the Donbas, in the Urals, everywhere, in short, throughout the whole Soviet Union where groups of German workers were taking part in the work of socialist construction.

Foreman Höniger had entered. Shaved, clean, with his clothes ironed, he was hard to recognize

as the black-faced man who had burst so indignantly out of the shower-room. He listened to my conversation with one of the miners, who was discussing my visit to the pit, and was saying: "Well, have you seen for yourself?"

I did not understand at once what he was referring to.

"I mean to say, do you understand now that we can't do anything with these Russian and Tatar boys—that we can't make miners out of them overnight."

And he was at pains to prove to me how impossible it was to transmit technical experience during the production process. There, in the danger zone, he said, where quick co-operation, cries of warning, commands, and lightning communication in the pandemonium of the pit cannot be achieved without common language and without long years of work together, it was virtually impossible to train the unskilled young workers of the locality. In any case, these young workers did not have the necessary feeling for the pressure of the earth (which a real miner ought to be able to sense through the air) in order to find out the correct points at which to place the props, the staves, the iron clamps and so forth; and besides that, there was the knack of coating the walls with concrete, of mixing cement, of hitting the right mixture, getting the correct water content, the necessary looseness—the local workers couldn't do it!

It was the honest megalomania of the skilled worker.

Höniger raised objections. "Since I've been living here," he said, "I'm sorry to say that I've not made much progress with the language. I manage to get

on with three words—*khorosho* (good), *plokho* (bad), and one powerful expression which you all know and which, to tell the truth, sometimes puts a lot of emphasis behind what you want to say.... I've no gift for studying languages—well, I've been meaning to get down to it for a long time, only something more important always interferes.... But anyhow with my three words of Russian I've trained no less than fifty Russian boys to be real miners during the past month. Peasant lads, couldn't even count up to three, and now you just ought to see how they handle a pneumatic hammer and a coal-cutting machine. It's a real pleasure to see them!"

My friend the miner wanted to rob his objection of its force: "What's that got to do with sinking a shaft? In the first place they work where it's dry, while we have to stand in' sand and dirt, and then you are an instructor anyway—that's your job.... Sinking the shaft is another question, and this four-metre assignment is no kid's game, I can tell you...." Höniger would not give in: "Do you think it's a kid's game to handle Flottmann hammers and big coal-cutting machines? If you do, you don't know anything about mining, that's my opinion."

The miner looks like flaring up at this, but Höniger turns to me: "Some of the comrades who think they are specialists at sinking shafts try to bawl us out for the way we do things, but they themselves go strolling around like lords, make a mystery out of their trade, condescend to sink one shaft and then—goodbye till next time, happy to have been of service to you! Good wages and heaven preserve them from having to do kid's work! But last month they only fulfilled their plan 76 per cent. What have you got to say to that, comrade?"

The miner does not relish the final argument. It seems to touch him to the quick. He is a member of a shock-brigade and the brigade's reputation means a lot to him. But 76 is not 100 and therefore 76 is an unpleasant argument to be used against him. He lowers the tone of his talk a few keys and turns the conversation to another subject. In the last resort it is all a question of faulty mechanization. If the necessary machines were here on the spot, all would be plain sailing and the plan would be fulfilled several hundred per cent. Where there were more machines, even the local miners were in a better humour and their average qualification increased. Höniger mentioned that on his section at any rate valuable imported machinery had been broken by unskilled hands. Qualification always and everywhere has to be gained by means of training, guidance and practice. A machine is not a teacher.

"That's right," puts in Julius who has joined the group and has been listening with one ear to Höniger's last words.

He and Arnold join in the conversation: "And it's just for that reason that we've been sent to work here—to show the others the way, to lead them and to see that there are no more breakages of machines which cost the Soviet state gold rubles. That's what we're here for. Each one of us can and must be an instructor. And the more workers we train, the more independent and invincible will the Soviet Union become. Yes, the whole tremendous experience of Europe and America together must be transplanted to Soviet soil! Isn't that a fine task, and an important one, for us fellows?"

Arnold takes a seat beside me and begins to tell me about the first German miners who came here

to work at Prokopyevsk and how disappointed they were at first. "In those days, in 1929 and 1930, there were hardly any machines and no mechanical driving power—that's what they told me. Nothing but a couple of small motors, wooden cranes and such things. Even the pit cage was worked by horses. The Siberian newspapers used to make fun of us. This was the future giant, they would say, and nothing but a horse to work it! They might have added that the cages in our mines were worked by hand before that, and I don't see anything so terrible about it. Every giant must have been little at one time, and so long as the shaft—even though it was six metres broad—was only a few feet deep, it didn't pay to introduce mechanization on a large scale. But when the German specialists came to Prokopyevsk and saw the horse-driven elevator, the hand-driven drills and concrete-mixers, they were horrified and raised a howl about Asiatic methods. That was the way they worked in Germany not one hundred but two hundred years ago! Well, in the last two years this gap of two hundred years has been covered."

4

Without doubt, sinking a shaft is one of the most difficult jobs in mining if not the most difficult. Among the 30,000 miners of Prokopyevsk the twenty or thirty men who were engaged in this work held something of a privileged position. The shock brigaders in rubber suits were treated with special respect by the other miners—a thing which was easily noticeable in their conversation. Besides this, these men also received comparatively higher pay than the other categories, and the way in which

they were fed and looked after left nothing to be desired.

The German miners were sinking the main shaft, a brigade of Russians the neighbouring one. And although no formal agreement had been concluded between the German and the Russian group, nevertheless an informal relation of socialist competition existed between them. Not only the workers but also the engineers and specialists of both groups attentively watched the successes and failures of their neighbours—"to see if they aren't catching up with us."

"Next week I must go over and see Mitri Mikolayich and draw up the agreement," Wegerich told me: "I think that by that time we'll be making the four-metre assignment for certain. So why shouldn't we put it down in black and white? A little slip of paper like that, stuck up on the wall, wakes the fellows up better than an alarm clock. We pledge ourselves before you Russian workers—doesn't that sound grand? And then we will put in another point—that Julius is to teach a Russian brigade how to sink a shaft. What d'you say to that, lad?"

I decided to go and see the "rivals" at once and find out how the land lay.

Mitri Mikolayich, the foreman of the Russian brigade, received me in the little colliery office at the neighbouring pithead. A small middle-aged man, stoutish, moustached, with a friendly smile and little liquid twinkling eyes under his peaked cap. He spoke loud, accompanying his words with vigorous gestures:

"Don't think that we're going to let ourselves be beaten. The Germans started six months later—that's true. They've sunk their shaft 115 metres and

we only 85—true again. But you just try and tell one of our workers that we're lagging behind! True, we've only made 85 metres, but then we've timbered and built the walls and cleaned up, and the Germans are behind with the concrete. And then the conditions in our brigade and theirs—no comparison! We did 20 per cent of the work by hand, while the Germans got machines from the very start...."

Here I interrupted with a loud cough, but Mitri Mikolayich continued imperturbably and in still louder tones: "That's not all! Our sandstone and slate is like granite compared with the crumbling sand in the main shaft, and besides that we're nearer to the cursed river than they are—we have to pump out 100 cubic metres of water an hour, the Germans only 40, don't forget that...."

He was carried away with his own eagerness. At this point, however, he drew up with a smile, pronounced in his best German and with all possible warmth and friendliness the two words "*lieber Genosse*,"* and added: "Mind you, I don't say that the Germans work badly. Oh no, on the contrary, we learn a lot from them. They're real masters of their trade, and they're always ready to help us. But we want to overtake and surpass them, and at the same time we don't want them to let themselves be overtaken and surpassed! For example, we now put on the concrete coating no worse than they do, and we do it quicker, really much quicker.... Would you like to know how our simple unskilled workers from the country feel about it? Yesterday, during the lunch hour, I was walking across the building site by the colliery. There I saw the navvies, along

* Dear Comrade.

with some girls, leaning up against the fence in the shade, nibbling sunflower seeds and cracking jokes about the passers-by. Foreman Höniger comes along; they all know him, all respect him, some of them say 'Mister Höniger,' but most of them call him 'comrade.' Well, I hear one of the lads saying: 'When his mother bore him, he must have squealed just as stupidly as I did, and I'm sure I must have howled as loud as he. And now—he's become an



engineer. Well then, I can become an engineer too some day, can't I? Besides, I'm younger than he is. . . . !' The lad laughed and all the others laughed too, but that's how he thinks, quite seriously and he's right!"

5

"Come on, let's go," and with a quick motion of his hand Julius swept up the chessmen from the board and led me and Arnold out of the room—it was the room in which Roll and Mannik lived, and we three had been spending several hours there, playing, telling our experiences and arguing. The corridor floor was clean and waxed, as were also most of the German miners' rooms. From the communal kitchen came the roar of primus stoves as from some invisible waterfall, presaging the approach of tea-time. Julius halted before his own door.

"I ought to tell you—my old lady's from the country, but she's a good one for all that," he whispered to me as he opened. There stood his young wife. She was with child, and her first involuntary gesture was to start back, as if in fear, holding her hands before her body.

"Let's have a cup of tea with our guests, Lena."

When his wife had gone out, he rubbed his hands gleefully. "Yes, our first one's on the way. Made in Russia. Our fellows can have two or three kids here—here where we don't have that cursed nightmare of worrying about tomorrow. Eh, Arnold?"

"That's where the Russians have got you beat. Look at our miner Syernov with thirteen kids and Dobrynin of Schachtstroy with fifteen, all alive and kicking."

"Well, well, don't let's start a competition! But you surely do get the feeling that a baby's a welcome event in a socialist state. Where else are our kids so well looked after as in this country? Care for babies and expectant mothers, day nurseries, kindergartens, homes and all the rest of it—everything paid for by the state! Where else in the world can you find anything to match that? In Germany Lena and I had nothing to eat ourselves. And as for children—heaven preserve us! They'd have been more of a disaster than anything else. They were feared worse than sickness. What did we want with them? They only meant cheaper hands for the bosses and cannon-fodder for the war lords!"

"And if your Lena were at work here in a factory, she'd get four months paid vacation from the state—two months before giving birth and two months after," put in Arnold with a laugh.

But Julius did not laugh. He frowned and was silent. "Your wife at work..." Arnold had touched a sore spot. The wives of even the best German miners were still housewives by profession. Even here, in the country of free working women, their daily life revolved in a narrow round of nursery and kitchen questions. Yet most of them were good comrades, never missed a meeting, did work for the M.O.P.R.* and knew how to lend a hand with a will at the *subbotniks*. Gradually arrangements were being made which would make it possible to set the women free from their household drudgery. The trade union had organized a kindergarten; but only with difficulty had one of the German women been persuaded to act as nurse in it. The communal kit-

* The Russian initials designating the International Labour Defence.

chen which had been organized for the foreign workers and specialists functioned irreproachably; nourishing, cheap, served in a clean, well-lighted hall, the dishes were appetizing and cooked as far as possible "German fashion." There were even paper serviettes and flowers on the white tablecloths. And nevertheless, despite everything, there were not a few mothers who wanted "their own kitchen" and were ready to fritter away half their lives among the saucepans.

Thousands of Russian women were employed in construction work above ground, on the railway and in the offices. But Lena did not relish the very idea of going out to work; hardly one of the German workers' wives was anxious to take direct part in the great work of production which was changing the face of the earth. That was bad—bad in two ways. For in the first place there was a big demand for labour power in Prokopyevsk, and in the second place the inevitable idleness gave rise to all sorts of women's gossip and quarrelling, petty ill-natured talk, a streak of the dark side of German provincial life, a whirlpool of discord into which the men too were sometimes drawn. It was all up with serious united work, with socialist competition and disciplined plan-fulfilment when the domestic peace of the German living barracks was destroyed! The slightest difference of opinion—on the quality of the food, on the way the doctor performed his duties, on the state of the cooking arrangements, on the deliveries of the postal service—might split the barracks into hostile camps. War would be declared in the kitchen, in the corridor, in the foreigners' co-operative store, in the dining room. Without

more ado Comrade So-and-So together with his family would be declared a class enemy, and even the work of political enlightenment had a hard job to break its way through the obstacles of quarrelsomeness and back-biting.

The teacups steamed, the conversation grew animated. But Lena sat silent and did not join in. I told about cases of a bourgeois spirit among foreign workers, about terrible things that had happened in Tula, in Bobriki, in the Donbas and in Moscow, where bad-tempered opportunists and even spies and paid fascist agents had wormed their way into the groups of German workers, had spread discontent and discord among the foreigners in order to carry out their sabotaging work of disintegration and destruction in the troubled waters. There had been capitulators and deserters who had thrown up the sponge in the face of difficulties and gone back to Germany; there had been *provocateurs* who were exposed and sent back home more quickly than they relished—people who were now eking out an existence in Germany, in the atmosphere of starvation and decay, on the bribes they received from the fascist press, functioning as welcome “witnesses” for savoury stories about the horrors in Soviet Russia.

That did not mean, Arnold put in eagerly, that all the unhealthy elements in the life of foreign workers here were the result of counter-revolutionary work. Far from it—he was right there. For example, one of the typical “infantile disorders” of German workers who come to the Soviet Union is to have somewhat strained relations with the management. Why typical? Because the worker who has grown up under capitalism cannot accustom himself

overnight to regard the Red director as his class brother, to regard the fires of industry as the triumphal torches of the proletariat, to watch over them day and night if need be and to identify the interests of production with his own personal interests.

"Oh, we know that all right," said Julius, who had meanwhile peeled off his grey-brown corduroy jacket, and he told about some of the intrigues with which Comrade Wegerich had had to battle, how this comrade, in the opinion of some wiseacres, had only supported the idea of the four-metre assignment in order to make himself popular with the management, how they accused him of being "hand-in-glove with the Russians."

"No, he's a splendid fellow, a true Communist," said Julius heartily, as he bent over the wash basin.

I was following another train of thought, and involuntarily I applied these words to himself. And at once I noticed that his way of speaking in the din of the mine was much more courageous, more powerful than here in the quiet of his own room, where Lena's devoted glance followed all his movements, or out in the open when he was alone with me. It seemed as though he had to shout above the roar of machines, give orders to brigades, put fire into a shock troop of workers, take the backward ones in tow and help them out of their difficulties—at such times he was in his element, then he was in full possession of his powers, spoke with the full force of his lungs. I seemed to see him in the steam laden dimly-lighted atmosphere of the pit, filled with a medley of shadowy figures, heaving and labouring at the face, seemed to see his dark shiny skin in the glare of the electric bulbs glimmering

through the wringing wet shirt which clung to his powerful shoulders....

But then my glance wandered over the wall, and there I saw a square piece of linen, hemmed and bordered with some lettering embroidered on it in red wool by Lena's hand. It read as follows:

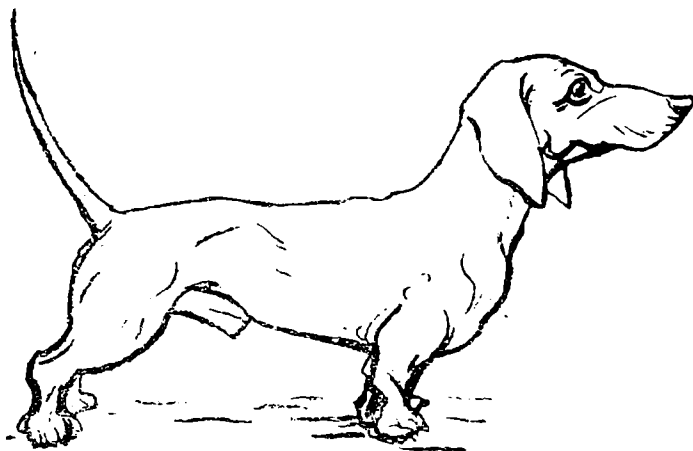
*Leave Care on the Doorstep,
Bring Joy when you come,
For here is your Birthplace
And here is your Home!*

"Of course, you know, that's not quite true," said Julius, passing the towel over his face as though he wanted to wipe away his embarrassed expression "I wasn't born here after all...."

"No, it's not quite true, Julius," I answered.

And I felt quite distinctly that this comrade was one of those who have already discovered their new home—that home which is Socialism and which comprises a new, another, a future Germany with it. But here, in his own room, the new home had not yet fully penetrated. There was still a hint of the old one....

6



That evening I accepted Höniger's invitation and went to pay him a visit. The foreman did not live with the other Germans in the barrack but in the old miners' settle-

ment, in the upper story of a wooden house. He and his wife and two daughters occupied two rooms with their own kitchen.

While I was still climbing the stairs, I heard the excited barking of a small dog—I guessed it must be a pomeranian—and the commanding tones of a woman's voice, probably that of Höniger's wife Gertrude: "Wotan, Wotan, be quiet, will you!"

Wotan whimpered and Gertrude's voice was silent.

Later on I made Wotan's acquaintance. He was not a pomeranian but only a dachshund with a pointed nose and a sharp bark. Gertrude was indisposed; she remained in the bedroom and did not show herself on this occasion. The two daughters however turned out to be gay and sociable—both of them blond haired, very much alike, between eighteen and twenty years old, slim pretty girls—two German Gretchens.

"I thought it was Nadya who had come," said one of them as she sat down.

The other took a seat by the window, looked up with a shy smile but did not put down her sewing.

Nadya, Höniger explained to me—her real name was Nadezhda—was his Russian teacher. He had only been working a couple of days with her: a young girl, member of the Komsomol, very clever, very talented and beautiful.

"Yes, unfortunately she is very pretty," said he, lowering his voice. "Gertrude is angry with me now. She can't forgive me because my Russian teacher is young and pretty."

"Now perhaps we may expect that your vocabulary will rapidly increase?"

"Certainly. Nadezhda means hope. And she is my hope, I can tell you. I've learned to pronounce the

most terrible words. I think I can do it right. Look here."

He pulled out his exercise book: "Listen! *Osushchestvivshayasya nadezhda*—that means 'hope fulfilled'. How does that sound? Can you repeat it after me?"

He kept pacing gleefully about the room, and seemed to be looking for something, but then again to forget what he was looking for. At last, from a wardrobe, hidden away under papers and linen, he pulled out a wooden box covered with red and gold strips of paper, with elegant lettering burned upon it.

"Real Virginia," he whispered solemnly. "I brought them with me, so they're really immigrants. The last fifty. They're my iron ration, and then—*adios*. You smoke, don't you, comrade? No? What a pity!"

He lighted a cigar. "Funny, isn't it, that the Russians don't have cigars? Yes, as I was saying—what disturbs me most is my wife. She can't understand it—and neither can I, to tell the truth—why it is that Comrade Nadya won't take any money for her Russian lessons. You understand, I am here, so to speak, to give them my best knowledge and the best that I can do. I do it fairly and honestly and with good will, but I get paid for it of course! It's obvious after all. . . . Now this pretty Russian girl won't even listen to me when I talk of paying her, she gets quite wild at the idea. You see, she's a member of the Komsomol brigade whom I'm training in mining, and the boys have decided to help me raise my qualification, as they told me, in order that I can better help them to raise theirs. A fine idea, isn't it? I must say they're a wonder-

ful lot! The way they take everything so seriously! I've never seen anything like it...."

A small stout man had entered the room without knocking. He must have caught Höniger's last words through the open door, for he wagged a fat fore-finger at him in ironical reproof: "Well, old fellow, are you still thinking of your beautiful Kom-somol bride?"

And in his oily voice, which sounded like roasted meat sizzling in the frying pan, he cracked an obscene joke which caused the elder daughter to lay down her sewing on the windowsill and sweep out of the room with a furious glance. The stout man gave a wheezy laugh, chuckled and continued in a husky voice. His smooth shiny blond hair was combed smoothly over the bald back of his head. His little eyes twinkled maliciously on either side of his big fleshy nose. He was not double-chinned, but as if to make up for



that, his dewlap hung loosely and his Adam's apple seemed to jump up and down as he spoke, like a ferret in a sack.

"Mr. Chuprin, our dog-breeder," Höniger introduced us.

"Pardon, pardon," the stout man corrected him with a polite bow. "Comrade Chuprin, Gennady Parfyonich, president of an artel for Siberian dog-breeding, Novosibirsk."

He spoke German fluently, though somewhat dubiously, with a pronounced Slavic accent, talked very loud and with the typical glibness of the commercial traveller. He tried to pronounce the "pardon" with an elegant French twang, through the nose. I took a closer look at him. His clothes emphasized still more markedly the impression of a commercial traveller. He wore a suit with padded shoulders which was intended to look European. Cuffs peeped out from under the short sleeves—certainly the only pair of cuffs in western Siberia—and I was surprised to note that he wore a democratic working man's cap instead of a felt hat.

His nimble hands found their way impudently to the cigar-box, drew out a cigar, then another one—one he stuck in his mouth, while the other he secreted in his breast pocket behind the flashy lace handkerchief which he wore there. His short arms were a model of adroitness and quickness.

"I buy curs from the villages for my kennels. The Soviet government encourages dog-breeding, firstly and secondly because—well, you know why—and thirdly because we need good cheap skins." Once again he bared his rotten teeth in a broad grin, gave a sly wink and pulled at his stubby fingers till the joints cracked.

"It was Mr. Chuprin who gave us our little Wotan," Höniger explained.

"Yes, the dachshund was reared in my kennels. You see, I have had German training, so to speak. Was a prisoner of war there, yes. Luckily the Württembergers took me prisoner near Tschenstochau as soon as war was declared. At first they put me to work on the Lüneburg Heath; there was a camp there—barbed wire, rotten food—and they made us work at mending roads, building embankments and so on. Then they sent me off to Posen, to an estate. The food was better there, and I picked up a girl. Katrin was her name—a Polish kid—I left behind two brats who are running around in Germany somewhere now—don't know whether they are living or where. Then they took me off to Berlin to train animals, and there I learned how to train retrievers, hunting dogs and so forth, besides dogs for the Red Cross, and then I trained some police dogs too, sharp-scented dogs. So you see I've had German training, hee-hee, I can make a genuine first-class German sheep dog out of any Russian cur you please. Good food and the whip—that's the whole secret.... But where is Gertrude hiding herself today?"

And with the assured movements of a man who feels himself perfectly at home he took three bottles of beer out of the wardrobe and, without taking the cigar from between his teeth, went on to speak of that wonderful Germany where the beer had a real taste to it (not like this yellow muck here) and the women, mmm!

"I was a fool not to stay there when I had a chance. That's all because of being so confoundedly homesick—our idiotic Russian soul, you know.

Couldn't I have earned plenty of money there with my dogs? And my citizenship would have been fixed up all right of course—in Germany, dog-breeders are privileged people. And then if I had come over here as a foreign tourist, that would have made you open your eyes! What's the attraction about this place? It's only an Asiatic edition of the Lüneburg Heath. In winter time the wolves rove around the town so you can't let the children out of the house. And men don't dare to venture far into the woods alone, or they come back with their noses bitten off. Here you can appreciate the value of a good watch-dog.... What do you say, Höniger? That there are eight million people starving in Germany? Aw, nonsense! Any beggar in Germany is a prince compared with our fellows, that's what, and what sort of a life do you lead here anyway—tell me honestly! An indispensable non-Party specialist like Höniger has to run around in unironed trousers, doesn't even have a proper wardrobe, his best suit hangs on a nail on the wall and gets dusty, the *Frau* Engineer has to wash the dirty linen with her own hands and the *Herr* Engineer rolls cigarettes out of newspaper, buys his milk in beer bottles, it looks all green, he can't have technical books sent to him from Germany and he learns Russian from a girl who takes no money...."

"Enough!" shouted Höniger with real violence and banged his fist on the table so that the glasses jingled. But Chuprin with a sly leer lifted his glass to Höniger, drank it to the dregs and then caught me by the sleeve and pulled me towards him, fingering the button of my coat. "A beggar's life in Germany—that's what he says," and he pointed over his shoulder with his thumb in Höniger's

direction. "And do you think we have no unemployed? Last time I was in Moscow on business, how many ten-kopek pieces did I throw into the hats of the poor jobless fellows on Theatre Square. I simply couldn't look at them without feeling a qualm—the human touch, you know, the idiotic feeling of human sympathy cost me a lot of money. All right, that was four years ago, you will say. And now? Look at the hundreds of thousands of peasants driven out of their homes—is that a joke maybe?"

He stopped abruptly. He had gone too far. He saw that I had noticed which way the wind blew. That was the kulak speaking. The bared teeth disappeared in an instant, and quickly, as if to cover up his tracks, he twisted his whole face into an unnatural grin.

"A nepman and a friend of the kulaks," I thought to myself. "It seems as if dog-breeding was not his only business...."

Through the open window my glance fell on the fenced yard outside where the warehouses of the Central Workers' Co-operative of Prokopyevsk stood. Before the entry the sentinel, a giant figure with pointed Red Army helmet, was pacing to and fro, resting his rifle on the ground every now and then.

I decided that Höniger's queer acquaintance ought to be placed under observation.

I heard the sound of loud young voices coming closer, the door burst open and there was Nadya, the Komsomolka, standing before us, arm in arm with Höniger's two daughters. She was twenty years old, black haired, her face flushed—a southern beauty in between the slim light-haired German

girls. She fixed her fearless gaze on Chuprin, came forward and, laying a book on the table, said in Russian without addressing any person in particular: "Radyukov from the Supply Department kept me waiting. He thinks it would be a good idea for us to do what they're doing in Kemerovo—to look more carefully into all the inhabitants of Prokopyevsk who are not employed at the mines, and to register them. I agree with him, it's high time. . . ."

Her look completed the sentence for her. Chuprin composed himself with difficulty. "We aren't wanted here," said he, and drew me by the sleeve towards the door. But his mocking smile was not so successful this time. "So you've guessed it, have you?" she shouted after him and shook my hand as she said goodbye. Rings of smoke ascended to the ceiling from the forgotten cigar. . . .

7

At last my wish was granted. I went down the mine with Wegerich.

He lit my pit-lamp from his own. Hung on the buttonhole of my jacket, it swung to and fro, casting a flickering light through the darkness of the galleries.

"Up till now you've only seen stones and water. Now you're going to see what it's like at the coal face. And here's the best place to see the coal, I should say. Ten million tons a year!"

Many figures can be dimly seen, crouching in the stony darkness of the pit. The lamps prick the darkness like stars—it is almost as if each were a world in itself. Here and there the miners are hewing at the face with hammers and picks, and that sounds like prisoners tapping on the wall; else-

where they set pneumatic hammers to work, and their rattle reminds you of sewing machines behind thick walls in a neighbour's apartment.

When they were sinking the shaft, the noise swallowed up all else. But here every sound echoes dully through a dense brooding silence. The oppressive stillness in the depth of the ground—the stillness of billions of tons of coal—is so powerful and dominating that the buzzing and beating that comes from various points, the whirring and groaning of the ventilators, the rattle of the compressor, sounds dull, half-throttled and solitary like the choking cry of the unborn. I am thankful to my companion for each word he speaks.

We are walking along the dark moist plank way that runs beside the narrow railway track. Suddenly we hear a metallic thunder, a clanging, rolling and whistling. We press close against the wall. The coal train rattles by—eight or nine tip-cars filled with coal. The horse that draws them throws up his head with a snort, his ears twitch, his tongue hangs out.

"Poor old horse!" Wegerich calls after him. "I'd like to harness in your place the bureaucrat who has been holding up the electrification of this mine for fifteen months!"

"Have you got enough current then?" I put in.

"Oh, there'll be current enough, as soon as we have contact with the Kuznetsk system. For the present though, the arrangements here are a bit comical. This pit has only two small dynamos at present, and please note their origin! One of them used to be in the basement of the Moscow Opera House to give current for the footlights, and the other is from the hold of a Japanese fishing cutter."

"And that's the reason why we have this dim lighting," he added and pointed to the flickering chain of lights along the gallery.

"Tell me, have you heard the story about how we put a stop to the pilfering of the bulbs? That was a fine example of socialist mass education. You see, formerly the electric bulbs in the galleries always used to get stolen. It was impossible to hang them any higher, and day after day they used to disappear. Of course, it was the new workers from the country. No warnings or lectures did any good. They simply hadn't grasped what socialist property is. Then one of the foremen had the idea of attaching a simple apparatus to each lamp which would give the thief a powerful electric shock. When the Communist nucleus heard about it, they got the District Committee to give the foreman a Party reprimand, because he took the line of least resistance, acted like a capitalist and endangered the health of the workers. The reprimand and the reasons for it were made public, the short-circuit apparatus was removed and the bulbs remained unprotected. But please note: the thieves did not once repeat their pilfering, for now even those among the workers who could not read or write had clearly grasped what socialist property is. Their collective conscience had been aroused. And this political short circuit in the brains of the thieves was more effectual than an electric shock in their muscles."

"So the poor foreman found himself among the unacknowledged inventors," I laughed.

"Yes, laugh if you like," boomed Wegerich. "Inventions and rationalization proposals form a chapter by themselves. I can tell you that there are

some real rationalizers here who have a hard time of it. And no one suffers so much under the might of the bureaucrats than some of our impatient German miners. But it's an honest impatience on their part, real Communist impatience. They are anxious to help. And they ought to be given a helping hand. We are all of that opinion. But often enough they get no help. We make inventions, improvements, simplify and rationalize things. After all that's what we're here for. We want to save the socialist state strength, money and time. We point out that this or that process is not going smoothly, we hand in drawings, designs, calculations, projects. But it so happens that cold water is often poured on our enthusiasm or else our proposals are shelved. For example, two of our comrades have constructed—unfortunately it still remains only on paper—a cheap and expeditious suspension railway which would make transport to and from the coal face forty per cent quicker and twenty-five per cent cheaper. For six months this plan has been shunted to and fro like an old locomotive between the inventions' bureau—the BRIZ—the mining technical department and the planning department. First it's sent to one place then to the next, and now I'm certain the whole affair has been shunted into a siding and forgotten. It looks as if somebody wanted waking up."

From the depths of the pit we saw a lamp come swaying towards us. It was the foreman who supervised the work of several miners' brigades. His long grey moustaches were trailing as he hurried up. He shouted at us from a distance: "Hello there, Misha! Fedya! Where's your light cavalry? Send up the light cavalry quick!" And he backed



up his words with a powerful expression which would have caused great embarrassment to any German interpreter.

The "light cavalry" is the name given to the much-feared brigades of Komso-mols who have a habit of turning up where they are least expected and checking up on the work. They spare no one in their thirst for information and are free from many of the "prejudices of the grown-ups."

The foreman had mistaken us for someone else. As he passed by, he mumbled something into his moustache, then recognising Wegerich, he turned back and shouted to him: "Hey there, you Germans, look and see for yourselves if we haven't got all we want down here—foreign machines and all, motors and compressors, hewing hammers, drilling hammers, drilling machines and coal cutters, all the buildings we want and freight waggons and German specialists too. Only one thing's lacking," and he tapped himself significantly on the forehead—"the putty that ought to glue everything together. Our young fellows break those expensive machines and the damn things cost gold rubles, so we have to ladle millions of gold into the foreigners' money bags and all for nothing! We haven't yet learnt

how to work! We're too darn young—yes, young—that's what I say!" And he pulled off his miner's cap, showing his silver white hair in the lamplight. Next moment he was lost in the dark, disappearing around the corner, and his voice came echoing as from a great distance through the hollow atmosphere of the pit: "Hi, Misha! Fedya!"

"Yes he has his bad days, has old Khnykin—quite loses heart sometimes. It's really time he gave up. 'Take yourself off home, uncle,' the colliers tell him in the canteen, 'you'll have to lay yourself in the earth soon anyway.' 'No,' says he, 'the earth doesn't want me; it's forty-four years now that I've been picking into its guts. I want to make it hot for you young rascals a little while longer yet, till you've learnt how to work properly!' And once he said: 'It's too late to die now, you can't die when there's socialism; I'm a candidate for the Party now....' Eh lad, just think of it—to master technique, to make yourself master of the whole tremendous working of it—it takes whole generations, from father to son and from son to grandson! But what took Germany sixty years to do, takes only four or five years here. That's reason enough for an old man to get impatient, isn't it? I can understand him so well, old Khnykin, I'd like to see that day too—the day when the whole business is finished at last. Gee, how wonderful that will be! And yet I know all the time that it will never be finished because there's no such thing as finishing, because it goes on and on, upward and upward! And you feel you'd like to do all you can for your part to make it go quicker, much quicker, and that even if you were born under capitalism, the end of your life has not been useless anyway...."

I looked at Wegerich's face. The meagre light did not permit me to find what I was seeking, but the ink-blue tracings of coal scars on his forehead, the seams and furrows, the lines around his mouth and eyes and on his temples told the hard life-story of one who had not gone through life in kid gloves. And his good strong hands kept feeling now to the right and now to the left, testing the pit-props or fingering the cold knobby wall of the gallery which cut through many seams and which glistened now with gray-green stone, now with fat gleaming black coal.

"Here's where the big seam begins. Take a look!"

The famous "big seam" is the biggest of all the twenty-nine seams of Prokopyevsk. The gallery runs through the whole magnificent thickness of this seam at the point where its two sharply diverging wings fold over each other like the fingers of clasped hands. Sixty metres of solid coal. You don't need to be an expert to know that this is a world record!

We stumble over cables. Here the face is being worked. Here the heavy artillery of the miners, the electric column-cutter, is in operation. The powerful machine lies crouched on its belly like a dragon; the conveyor waves like a lashing tail, and the flat lizard's nose, quivering with eagerness, bites its way into the coal. The machine drones and gnashes, drowning the whirr of the ventilator which is sweeping the blackish smoke of pulverized anthracite out of the pit. In thirty minutes' time the blaster will begin his work.

The great blocks of coal, carefully marked out beforehand and then cut out by the column-cutter, are more easily detached by means of blasting. The

coal-cutting machine saves hundreds of hours' work which would have to be done by the hewers. Now regular chambers of coal are broken off in one solid block. A sort of wooden skeleton made of props and joists holds up the coal and assures the security of the walls during the cutting process. Then the upper blocks of coal are blasted so that they cave in and are brought up to the surface by steam navvies; the lower blocks of coal are covered over and left to lie in peace for future years.

We turn back. The noise of the cutters follows at our heels and the sweetish smell of heavy nitrogen gases wafts us on our way. We have to go back at least two hundred paces before it is quiet enough for conversation.

"That old fellow Khnykin," Wegerich continues, "used to be a typical opponent of mechanization; there are still plenty of them among the old workers—thirty or forty years they've been working with pick-axe in hand, they want to stick to the old rut and think that a job isn't done honestly unless it's done by hand—everything else is a swindle and all technical progress is the work of the devil. And when something goes wrong with the coal cutter, it's always the complicated technical tool that's to blame of course, and not the bad machinist! Well, that used to be uncle Khnykin's opinion too, until one day Höniger initiated him into the whole business from pneumatic hammers to electric coal-cutters. Since then he swears by the machines and is always to be seen in the brigade of Komsomols which is studying the business. You mustn't take him too literally, that's all. He knows as well as I do that we haven't got nearly all we want here yet and that it isn't only the lack of knowledge that's

the trouble. Just think it over—what's the use of partial mechanization when the whole process can't run smoothly from beginning to end? Coal-getting with machines doesn't work properly unless it's backed up by mechanized conveyors, electric coal trains and so on. If the transport doesn't do its job, production has to wait. That's how it is, and when the blind pit-ponies have made way for electric trains, then the light cavalry, whom our friend the foreman has been hollering for—not for the first time either—won't have to interfere so often....

"How about vigilance? Sure we got to be vigilant. It's true, technique helps to educate workers, to organize and train them. But the trouble is, it also makes the class enemy more cunning. Not long ago in one part of the mine the compressed air tubes were found slashed at the beginning of each shift. So two of our German colliers who worked the morning shift decided not to leave the mine; they concealed themselves in a corner and managed to catch the fellow in the act of cutting the rubber tubes. But he was nearly too quick for them. He struck their only lamp out of their hands—there's no illumination in the traverse galleries as yet—and began slashing around with his knife. Luckily one of our colliers had an electric torch with him. He flashed it in the fellow's eyes and socked him on the jaw. Well, and he turned out to be—what do you think? The son of a former kulak and the brother of two well-known bandits from the Tomsk region. Well, there you have it—that sort doesn't carry a jack knife in his trouser pocket to pare his nails with....

"Wait a bit, weren't you interested in this dog-breeder? You'll laugh when you hear the story.

That fellow was plaguing the mines management to give him the job of interpreter for our German group. Unluckily for him, the people at Novosibirsk told us who this Mr. Chuprin was. He's a German-Russian. What he says about his having been a prisoner of war is quite true, and it's also true that he opened a dog shop at Frankfurt on the Oder afterwards. His real name is Schöpfel. Johann Schöpfel. He'd have liked that job of interpreter, I can assure you! With the groups of German workers the interpreter is manager, middleman, factotum, all rolled into one. A tremendous lot depends upon him for the weal or woe of the whole group. And many of these interpreters are swindlers or saboteurs. They'll put themselves in between the foreign department of the trust and the group of workers, sow discord between workers and engineers, between Russians and Germans. And the interpreter can poison relations, organize misunderstandings, artificially isolate the foreigners. A wrongly translated word during a conference, discussion or conversation can play havoc with the whole political atmosphere of a factory. Just try and prove afterwards that it wasn't an inexactitude but a lie, that it wasn't haste but ill-will that caused the slip of the tongue! And many a good group of German workers has been given one of these bad interpreters who has kept our comrades hemmed in within a wall of suspicion for months on end and led them around by the nose.

"One of the interpreters we had here was a German teacher who had been expelled from the Party, a Trotskyist, and he played us many evil tricks; he tried to put all sorts of ideas into the colliers' heads, especially when there was some ex-

citement about the confused and wrong method of reckoning wages. But now one or two of us have already learned a good bit of Russian and have got into contact with some good healthy young Russian workers. Besides that I am always on the spot myself. Well, what do you think? This fellow wanted to start a regular agitation against the mines management, just to get up a little strike so that the English papers could once more write some nonsense about the exploitation of foreign labour power in the Soviet Union. Well, he had no luck! He didn't cut much ice with us.

"Johann Schöpfel must have got wind of this and have decided to get this profitable post for himself, and strangely enough, he thinks that he can guarantee the success of his plan by gaining the sympathies of Frau Höniger. But he, too, has reckoned without the host. The slyest speculators are always stupider than a chicken on some point or other. All the same it looked as though Höniger was going to take the bait at first. Yes, the enemy is still strong. We've got to fight him. It's a good job we have a firm vigilant Party nucleus in the colliery.... And why is it, why the hell is it that Trotskyists, nepmen, friends of the kulaks, speculators and the likes of them so easily win the confidence of many German workers who come here? Why is it that Mr. Chuprin finds it easier to make friends among the Germans than the Russians? I know why. It's because the Russians have been drawn into socialism through the revolution, which they've lived through themselves, while our fellows have come in by express train via Negoreloye or Bigosovo."

Wegerich put down his lamp on the ground where the flame, coming into contact with the

dead air, dwindled and grew yellow. He pulled out a pipe and tobacco pouch from his inner coat pocket.

"No, explosions are rare here. The air in the Kuzbas mines isn't explosive and the little bit of nitrogen near the ground doesn't do any harm; it won't take fire.... Now look, we've nearly landed up by the conveyor."

Indeed I had hardly noticed that we had turned into a broad gallery which followed along the length of the seam in a gentle bend. We turned off the track now to the left, now to the right as trains of tip-cars came to meet us or overtook us. I regretted having interrupted Wegerich's train of thought. It seemed to me that he was just coming to the most important point of all. Now he had been side-tracked.

Now he would catch hold of a horse's bridle to test the halter and the buckles, now he would admonish one of the drivers, who was making too plentiful use of the whip: "Hi, comrade, you're hitting yourself when you flog that horse! We're not that rich yet...."

And now, while the dust and clatter almost forbade conversation, he explained to me, more with gestures than with words, the simple mechanism of the "skidway."

A worker throws open the iron door of a sort of port-hole in the wall of the gallery, and a cascade of coal comes rattling down, pouring out of the black hole into the tip-car standing ready beneath, then into the next, the third, the fourth, until the train is fully loaded. Then the door is slammed to, the driver gives a whistle, the train starts off with a clatter of hoofs and a rattle of wheels. And then,

if the shift is well organized, the next train comes rolling up at once to take its place.

Above us, parallel with this pit-railway, runs another gallery cutting across the breadth of the seam. The "skidways" are like little funicular railways connecting the upper galleries with the lower ones at the dip of the seam. Thus the force of gravity is used as a cheap substitute for motor power in places where the seams of coal run at a steep angle. In the upper gallery the coal which has been hewn is loaded on to wheelbarrows and brought to the "skidways," through which it is sent tumbling down to the lower gallery and the pit railway. This method of work is always used in coalfields where the seams run obliquely. The miners gradually work their way up and up from the lowest gallery towards the apex of the seam. The coal flows downward, it flows like tumbling mountain streams into the big river of the lower level.

Wegerich opens one of the trap doors, sets his foot on the iron rung and swings himself into the black opening. I follow him. The lamp hampers your movements as you climb; head and back knock against the wall of the narrow tunnel. The ladder is formed of rounded pieces of wood placed at rather large intervals apart. Now and again one of the rungs is missing. Beside you, behind a plank partition, there is a sudden rumble and crash. You hold your breath and wait tensely listening for a long torturing second! It is the coal tumbling down the "skidway." The whole of this "chimney" is divided into two halves—one half for the coal, the other for the ladder by which to climb to the upper gallery.

The loader in the lower gallery has closed the

trap door behind us. The lamps burn dimly. From above, small fragments are falling on my hands and on to my hat. In my throat, in my head and ears, I can feel pulses beating loud. This is what it feels like, I imagine, to be buried alive.

But Wegerich has already reached the top and calls down to me: "Hello there, lad!"

There is no electric light in the upper gallery—only the bobbing lamps of the men at work, as they shovel the coal.

But far away down the tunnel, perhaps five hundred metres off, you can see light and movement. There the men are working at the face. The light glimmers along the endless rows of smooth pit-props. Another trap door is opened before us. Coal pours down from the "skidway" which leads from here up to the second parallel gallery running above us. A biggish heap of coal is accumulating before the opening of the "skidway." Three colliers are shoveling the mass of coal without any fuss or hurry into the wheelbarrows. They must have been telling each other some dandy jokes, for every now and then they double themselves up over their shovels and burst into unrestrained neighs of laughter. Their white teeth glisten in their coal-black faces.

"Yes, it's funny, isn't it?" shouts Wegerich. "Something to split your sides over, that's what I call it! Can you understand why it is that three men have to work here when three boards could do the job for them—I mean an ordinary wooden gutter to connect up the upper 'skidway' with the lower one. That shouldn't need any almighty commissions and expert advice, I should think! Aah, lad, some of the managers who sit up there in the colliery office

have other views, it would seem. They can't see a thing unless it's first stamped and signed. That's the fear of the bureaucrat for responsibility. And that gives rise to the theory about the man higher up—the theory that even the simplest proposal, before it's put into effect, has first got to be sent up all the twelve rungs of the ladder and then sent down again with twelve signatures. What's to be done? Next free day I'm going to come around here with two comrades and three boards, and we'll fix up the gutter on our own as an experiment.

“But what do our impatient German comrades do sometimes in such cases? First raise a howl against the whole system of authorities and then take up each matter, even if it's only a trifle, with the highest man they can find. And that's what they call introducing rationalization! Of course that's not the way. I say to myself: saving time is more important than being in the right. I don't make complaints, I look for allies. Where? In the factory committee, and if they won't listen to me, in the Party committee. The Party committee's always ready to listen to good ideas—no matter whether they're big or little ones so long as they're good ideas and help things forward! The Party committee sends for the manager in question: Take a seat, Vassily Vassilyich, do you know the six conditions of Comrade Stalin? Well, there's a seventh one which sums up all the others and it's called: New methods of work, new methods of leadership! We just wanted to remind you about it, Vassily Vassilyich. . . . And so on. Lád, the effect of that is like a thunderstorm. Before, everything was stuffy and close, afterwards the air is clear. And sure enough they get to work! That's how many of those mira-

cles are performed about which all the papers are writing. Yes, management and leadership is a job that has to be learned like any other...."

We climb down to the lower gallery and make our way back to the elevator cage.

On a thick wooden board spread over with grey paper the time-keeper is marking down every coal train which comes and every cartload which is emptied into the cage. Each time he pulls out a thick watch of Tula silver from the breast pocket of his coat. He writes laboriously and clumsily in great sprawling letters, every now and then dipping his pencil point into a little puddle of spittle which is slowly running down his narrow desk. This old man could not read or write before he came to the pit, but he fulfils his office in a more reliable fashion than many of the foremen. With the exception of the Germans, he knows each one of "his" three or four hundred miners by name, including first names and fathers' names; he knows from which village each one comes and in which brigade he is working. He looks prophetically into the future and can unerringly predict who is going to be put next upon the Red Board of honour and who upon the Black Board of disgrace.

He can also tell you why it is that the Black Board now bears the following inscription: "The foreman, Comrade A. S. Klimenko, is hereby given a severe reprimand for negligence, and warned that he will be dismissed if his offence is repeated. The Mines Management."

"Quite right and, just," says the time-keeper. "Alexey Sidorovich didn't spoil the pump himself, but it was spoiled during his shift and he didn't tell the next shift about it.... One man has got to be

responsible, not ten or twenty. Personal responsibility, that's what we want! We had three hours' stoppage on account of Klimenko's pump. That's a fact!"

The pump is at work behind the partition close to the loading station. Its function is to pump the water out of the mine. If there is much water in the mine, a reserve pump in the neighbouring pit has to be called into action, otherwise the pit will be flooded.

"Time's up!" shouts the foreman, who has come up meanwhile.

"Time's up! Time's up!" the cry is passed on from man to man through the gallery and penetrates into the furthest parts of the mine. The fourth shift is over. With one or two men from the first brigades to quit work, we go up in the cage to the surface.

The daylight has faded. It was a fine summer's afternoon when we went down and now it is starlight. From the night beneath we ascend into the night above.

The fresh air feels unspeakably soft and sweet. It seems as if it had lain all day in gardens and orchards and drunk in the breath of trees and flower beds.

From the high colliery tower you can see the last figures of the night shift hurrying to work with their pit lamps already lit. They look like a swarm of glowworms.

Prokopyevsk has lit its lamps. From far and near locomotives can be heard blowing their whistles. The stocky scaffolding of the tower, black with coal dust, quivers as the cage rises and falls. The steel cables are stretched tight over the grooves of

the pulleys and on the other side descend obliquely to the machine house, over whose roof hangs a trembling cloud of steam.

On the broad scaffold bridge, which, like a wooden landing stage hanging in mid-air, stretches out into the night over the yard and slag heaps, a swarm of women workers, shouting and singing, are dressing the dry coal.

The tip-cars, filled with coal, are heaved out of the cage on to the bridge. From the tip-cars the coal is let fall through iron gratings. The gratings sort out the lumps of coal from the coal dust and the small fragments, which are then passed through finer gratings, sorted out again and distributed into the bunkers which adjoin the railway. With a dull rumble the black avalanches of coal pour into the freight cars. The locomotives, snorting and quivering, wait for the signal to steam off. And the river of coal to which this pit contributes will roll on till it reaches the foot of the far-off Urals—Magnitogorsk.

An aeroplane in full flight, a racing motor, an express locomotive, a galloping horse, a bicycle, a peasant's cart, a tortoise, a snail and a crab! Such are the symbolic emblems painted on the board which shows the tempo of the competing brigades.

Koshkin's brigade, which has fulfilled its plan 44 per cent, rides upon the tortoise; Matvey Dymko's with its 138 per cent of plan fulfilment rides in the aeroplane. These are the two extremes between which the other brigades occupy various places. The crab and the snail are left vacant. But that was not always so. Last year there was a huge "breach" in the plan, and Prokopyevsk still remembers its great experience when it lived through weeks of

storm, weeks of feverish work. This time of struggle gave birth to these iron brigades of miners, such as that of the brigadier Dymko which meets each planned assignment with its own counterplan and then puts even this in the shade by its actual achievement.

It looks as though this miners' settlement were a place of endless unrest. A hollow sound of rolling and pounding broods over it like a huge glass dome that rings and echoes when struck with a metal rod.

Wegerich views the competition board and knocks out his pipe.

"And the German miners?" I ask him. "What place will they take, if you don't mind my asking?"

Wegerich gives me a long sidelong glance with a queer smile on his face. "To hell! I didn't really want to let out the secret," he says at last. "I was keeping it for tomorrow evening.... Well, then, I won't make a mystery of it. The fact of the matter is we've changed from the bicycle to the race horse. One hundred per cent! Four shifts—four metres. That's the way it's been for nine shifts running. But now it's high time to sign the competition agreement, otherwise they'll be calling me an opportunist. But don't start shouting yet for it'll soon be quite another story—take the word of an old-timer for that. When the lads have once got it into their heads that they can do four metres, then [he bent down and whispered confidentially into my ear] then they'll make six! Sure they will! that's the sort they are. Did you ever doubt it?"

And he pointed with his pipe stem to the aeroplane, which, with its whirring propeller, seemed ready to soar off into the blue.

(A Meditative Letter to a Friend)

Prokopyevsk, July

Dear Comrade Z.,

Many thanks for your kind letter from the Moscow dog days. Your letter, addressed to Stalinsk as arranged, has been forwarded to me here by Abchuk, who is already staying in seething Kuznetskstroy. Safar has gone off for a few days to Byelovo, where a considerable number of his fellow-countrymen are working. And a similar reason has kept me longer than I had expected in Prokopyevsk, where there is a quite large and very interesting group of German workers and specialists working in the mines.

Do you remember how once last winter on the way home from the Dzerzhinski Club we had a long talk on the subject: "Workers from the West in the Soviet Union" (I think it was after a lecture by a man from the Council of Labour and Defence)? We wanted to continue our talk some time, didn't we? But unfortunately our life in Moscow—in these splendid years of hard intensive work—is too busy to afford us many such occasions, and so I would like—if you don't object (and if you do, it won't help you much)—to put down one or two ideas on paper which form, so to speak, the sediment of my experiences here and the rounding off of our conversation.

We were speaking then of the "infantile disorders" of German workers' groups in the Soviet Union, and you agreed with me when I said that workers who have grown up under such highly developed conditions of capitalist production as those in Germany cannot adapt themselves all at

once to the radically different conditions of socialist production.

My experiences in Siberia corroborate this once again.

Even some of our Party members come here with a very inadequate idea of socialist reality as it is in this country. As a result of their old habits acquired in the class struggle abroad—habits which were sound and healthy originally but which here turn into something quite the opposite—they continue in this country of proletarian dictatorship to regard the state or the management as their natural opponents which it is their duty not to help and serve to the best of their ability, but rather to present them with demands and “make things hot for them”.

Is not this a classic example of the harmfulness of reacting in a mechanical, undialectical way to the changed conditions of a new world?

In the case of the comrades concerned, this is of course much less a theory with which they are imbued from within than a practice which is mostly encouraged by others from without. And who are these others? They are naturally those elements who are interested not in doing away with our shortcomings and errors but rather in preserving them. They are our enemies. You know as well as I do what varied methods they employ in their attempts to make up to our inexperienced “immigrants”. Everything that comes from “the other side” seems to these “have-beens” to be somehow kith and kin to them; at the same time they view the “foreigner” as someone who will most likely lend an ear to their anti-Soviet talk and their search for sympathy.

But do not let us talk of enemies now. Among our workers there are many who come here with

very simple ideas in their heads. Communism, they think, is already a finished product, and it works out something like this: the workers go riding about in motor cars and watch the bourgeoisie doing the work for them. (I exaggerate the picture purposely in order to bring out the absurdity of this view.) Naturally anyone who thinks like this is disappointed. The class struggle here is more complicated than it is over there, and it is no less violent. And the dictator, the proletariat, is a working dictator—a fact which distinguishes him profoundly and fundamentally from all other dictators of world history. And his dictatorship and labour are directed towards the aim of making any kind of dictatorship in the future superfluous and impossible, *i.e.*, towards the aim of bringing about the classless society.

So the German collier arrives here and is met with music and flag-waving. Then he gets into the workaday Soviet life. Over there, there were thousands of factories standing idle and millions of jobless workers. Here, there is a shortage of labour power and machines. Many things are lacking and there is much that does not yet function properly, both in the factories and at home. Maybe the living houses are not completed or maybe there is no milk and then there are difficulties and misunderstandings with the Russian foremen and engineers, in the tool room, in the mine and at the lathe, when the wages are figured out, when appearing before the technical commission, and at twenty other points.

One fellow is irritated, another is discouraged. Some are reduced to despair, to anarchy and disobedience, even to open hostility. Such fellows get sent home, or maybe they don't wait for orders but

go of their own accord, depart ingloriously and with no strains of music to accompany them. Meanwhile however the housing question, the food question and the question of supplies are regulated, and in the factory the better and more persevering section of the workers have been fighting on unafraid, unshakable in their endurance, in their belief in the creative power and mission of the working class. One by one the shortcomings and errors are overcome, socialist methods of work gather momentum. Things look different. And then, almost as a rule, the faint-hearted ones who have gone home write pitiable letters to those who have stayed behind: What fools we were that we ran away! Now we are in a hopeless mess. And it's not only the milk we are missing now! Ah, boys! If only we could come back again—come back to the true home of all workers. Now at last we can see and understand....

And the specialists? They too have their distempers, their moulting season. On the third day over they ask themselves: Why have I got to fight for everything which I ought to get as a matter of course? Why have I got to run around, to argue, to fight for tools, materials, workers—for things which are prime necessities and which I used to get for the asking over there. Over there everything went smoothly of its own accord; here things don't go right, and I have to be responsible for it. What's the idea? And then I am supposed to train the workers if they don't suit me. Over there I simply asked for other workers and I got them at once. And then these storm brigades, this socialist competition, the piece work and the many different grades of wages—is that socialism? It seems funny. Didn't

the workers over there protest against it and call it slave-driving? And here I am supposed to enter into agreements with the workers—agreements for socialist competition. What's the idea? I have my contract with the trust, I do my duty and draw my salary. If I fail, I am dismissed, and that's that.

And these production conferences, where the unskilled workers get up and make speeches; and the eternal rationalization proposals—you have to run yourself off your feet seeing that they get put into effect; and these factory committees which are also trade unions and which instead of fighting for high wages and short working hours encourage the increase of labour productivity and the reduction of production costs—why, they look upon themselves as “social levers” in helping to get the plan fulfilled. Plans and counterplans, brigade agreements and individual pledges—what's the idea of all this intricate system of enthusiasm and obedience, of initiative and discipline, this doubling and trebling of personal responsibility? And then those celebrated cost accounting brigades which calculate their own debit and credit and guarantee to yield a profit for the benefit of socialist industry; and the equally celebrated “tug boat” brigades whose job is to take the backward ones “in social tow”.... Over there, in the capitalist world, everything is much more plain and simple: those on top give the orders, those below have to obey. Those who don't work economically get fired; those who lag behind are put out on the streets! Outside the gates the army of unemployed, the great reserve army of industry, is standing ready. It offers cheap and willing labour power to replace those who are fired; it depresses

the wages as it should. And here—here special recruiting brigades are mobilized, special delegates are sent to the countryside to induce the collective farm peasants to come into industry for six months, for a year! Yes, it's a queer world! That's how the specialist thinks on his third day over.

Let's grant that for one who comes from the other side all this is really a bit hard to grasp within three days. But after three weeks' work it can be done.

Only think: the journey into the country which has entered upon the era of socialism is not like an excursion abroad from one country into another. It is a leap into a new world. Those who come here to gather impressions may content themselves with a "Guide Book to the Soviet Union" or with one of the pretty interpreters from Intourist. But those who come here to help in the building of socialism (and socialism is a thing whose inner nature can be penetrated only by one who joins in the struggle and not by a neutral observer!) must literally be born again—their consciousness must be completely remoulded. Hence the long, difficult, painful process of "acclimatization" which our comrades have to go through while their whole character is being "recast in the Soviet melting pot," as the Russians call it. But this is not a passive state; it means taking active part in the creative labour of the great Plan. And it means intensive study, not only of the Russian language. . . .

One of the most genuine fighters among the German miners—a certain Wegerich, about whom I shall speak to you again later—expressed it somewhat like this: it makes a big difference whether a proletarian has come to socialism through the

revolution or by crossing the border. In the latter case he will not immediately be equal to the big task that faces him, to change from being a slave of the means of production into their master, to become a part of the ruling, dictating class, of the class which fights for the classless society! Yes, remember that even for the Russian proletariat Lenin predicted several decades of hard trials and struggles before, having changed the world around it, it would have changed itself. The epoch of cultural revolution!

Just think it over. Communist education throughout fifteen years of Soviet power. This path of sacrifice from October and Civil War up to the victory of the Great Plan. Political training by a Bolshevik Party numbering millions, asserting and proving its iron general line of policy in struggle against the Right and "Left" opportunists before the eyes of the whole world. One must be politically blind or completely alien to the working class if one cannot see even today that the construction of socialism in one country is possible, that its completion has been basically assured already and that it is just this fact which brings the World October a good bit nearer.

This process has re-made the men of the Soviet Union.

Millions of working people have been through the Red Army, millions have been through the trade unions—this "school of Communism," through tens of thousands of political schools, Red universities, workers' faculties! And thus, through struggle and through work, the average Soviet worker has achieved a degree of social and political maturity such as the foreign proletarian does not yet have

and cannot yet have. This cannot be replaced by superior technical knowledge.

You have to think of all this when you come in contact with foreign workers here.

However, this understanding has until lately not been common to all local Party secretaries, factory committees and Red directors who have had to do with foreigners. Instead of bearing in mind that they were dealing with persons whose mentality had been formed by the capitalist world, under conditions of the class struggle which are radically different from those in the Soviet Union, they have without more ado expected of the newcomers a perfect understanding of the conditions and difficulties of the Soviet country, and they were predisposed to explain every misunderstanding by the difficulties of a foreign language. Translators were sent for in a hurry; they were recruited without proper selection from the most dubious circles, and so some no longer young lady from the former "better circles of society" or some semi-intellectual son of a rich peasant was given a say in the management, in technical commissions or elsewhere, where the class enemy was at once presented with a tempting opportunity to do great damage with little risk.

Moreover, the groups of foreigners often included people who did not even possess the technical knowledge expected of them, who sometimes even had no notion of the speciality they professed. On the other hand there were also native specialists, mostly middle-aged ones, who scented an especially dangerous competitor in every foreign engineer or technician and who consequently betrayed chauvinist leanings. But most of the manag-

ers tended to expect pure miracles of their "respected guests" without any previous test. And then when some technical fourflusher had been exposed, they were instantly ready to draw general conclusions from this unpleasant experience and to swell the chorus of the chauvinists: "To hell with these foreigners! None of them are any good. They are only so much useless ballast for us" I know of such cases on the other side of the Urals, and they have repeated themselves here too. The Germans of Prokopyevsk have not yet really penetrated into the sound robust proletarian life of the mines where they work. Until lately in fact they even had their own exclusive Party nucleus for foreigners, which regarded itself as more or less extra-territorial, did not have much time to spare on the daily troubles of the enterprise and was very far from mobilizing and leading the German miners in the struggle against the opportunism that was rampant among them. No wonder that the German nucleus, isolated in this way, cut off from the life of the Prokopyevsk Bolsheviks, let itself be led along by its own opportunists. All this is beginning to change now.

Wegerich is not the only steadfast German Bolshevik who is pointing the way to the others here and telling them that concentrated political cultural work must be done in conjunction with the local miners, that all barriers between German and Russian workers must fall, that the keen, all-penetrating internationalist class sense must be strengthened, must be awakened where it is still sleeping! Two or three smarmy "shopkeeper" souls, who came over here with the others in order to live comfortably and profitably on Soviet soil and who here

impudently pretended to be "representatives of the German people" as against the "mere Russians," have already been sent back home. The Wegerichs are winning over the colliers to their side one after the other. They are leading victorious attacks against all signs of faint-heartedness, and also against those who conceal the heart of a German shopkeeper under their worker's clothes. (Yes, there are some of those too!) No disappointment, no hostility can bend their revolutionary sense of duty, their Red optimism.

Julius R., another good fighter here, once said to me: "Up till now we've been taking on too much all at once. What we have to do is to concentrate all our forces on one point at a time and break through the front there. Then it works. Only then can you see what a fine lot of real young proletarians we've got here, only one or two are a bit down in the mouth. Brigade work's the thing. When the brigade starts working, they show what they can do! Let them only get wind of a real competition—you ought to see them work then!"

This comrade is of the opinion—and I think he is right—that the confidence of the backward elements among the foreign workers and specialists must be won right on the job, in the mine itself, by definite successes, by dint of hard work.

Wegerich once complained to me in a reflective moment: "I must say our comrades don't always make the work easy for you. No, I don't mean the political side—the callow talk of a few individuals one can easily handle. But the personal things, the private matters, you understand—slanders and suspicions.... Well, for the most part I've set my teeth and kept quiet when some idiot described me

as the pet lamb of the administration and so forth. Only once, at a meeting, I went off the deep end and started bawling like the others. That did a lot of harm. However, I put it right later on.... Oh, I can tell you, I mean to spend another couple of five-year plans here. We've got over bigger hardships in our time!... But don't you want to stay another couple of days in Prokopyevsk, lad?"

Well, as you see, I have stayed. And I haven't regretted it. Looking at Wegerich and Julius, I thought to myself: Germany, you might have sent us more of that sort! Well, this group of workers as it stands will bear inspection all the same. Our fellows here have grasped that socialist labour is a matter of honour, the duty of heroes. And that's the turning point.

Enough for today. I still have many other questions and arguments on my mind, but they can wait until we meet next. Now I am off to the Artem Club where a socialist affair of honour is being threshed out, an agreement for socialist competition between the German and Russian miners, between pupils and teachers, is to be solemnly signed. It turns out that the pupils have become very serious rivals to their teachers.

Please write me again soon, to Kuznetskstroy, Stalinsk. I'll be there in two days' time. Best greetings. Must stop now, they are coming to fetch me.

9

Over the roof of the engine room a small white cloud appears and a moment later you can hear the call of a middle-aged steam siren. At first it sounds like the startled scream of a terrified young lady;

then it passes into a long-drawn wail and breaks off suddenly with an angry hiss. That happens four times in every twenty-four hours. The six-hour day is established by law in Soviet mines.

The men stream out over the colliery yard, out through the gate in the direction of the little stream Aba. Here part of the crowd branches off towards the temporary bridge, while the others go along the bank of the stream and scatter among the buildings; some come across the communal gardens past the club, and here a swarm of men always enter to take a look at the newspapers, have a game of dominoes, or borrow new books from the library; and it is not only the proverbial Komsomolkas in their red kerchiefs and green blouses, it is not only the young workers who come.

Club houses at the big Soviet factories are like an extra factory shop—a cultural shop, a great department for mass education. They even have their own special management, directors and staff. Sometimes, on summer mornings, when the librarians on duty are as bored as *kvass* sellers in rainy weather, surrounded by their rows of silent books with the bitter-smelling inkpots side by side with greasy flypapers on the tables, a crowd of workers of both sexes and all ages will suddenly burst in after the shift or from the playgrounds, laughing, arguing, criticizing the wall newspaper, examining the books on view, rummaging among the magazines, asking for this and that and giving the librarian plenty to do. And at once these rows of books cease to be still and lifeless things; and suddenly there is nothing in this bright overcrowded room but the presence of gay, inquisitive human beings, full of interest, hungry for culture and thirsting for know-

ledge—Siberian miners, old and young, for whom the revolution and the six-hour day have opened up a new world: the history of mankind and the realm of nature, a complete new world, previously unknown to them, of words, pictures and mighty thoughts.

I know no "public library" in Western Europe where the classics and the best of contemporary authors are not covered thick with dust. Here, in socialist Siberia, you cannot find one book out of all the thousands of every category, including Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev and Tolstoy (not to speak of the much-loved Soviet modern authors), you cannot find one single book which has not been in many hands, found its way into many pockets, been thumbed and read through and through by these same masses of now thinking people over whom the real "power of darkness" held sway not long ago!

They came in swarms to the classes for liquidating illiteracy, to the courses for further technical education; at the lectures and talks on popular science there were so many of them that they had to sit two on one chair.

In the rainy autumn weather, when the clay outside turned to glue and clung to their boots as the flypaper clings to the fly, their heavy miner's boots left behind many muddy tracks on the floor of the clubrooms.

But neither the mud on the floor nor the smell of sweat in the little reading room nor the blue haze of pipe smoke in the meeting room nor the haphazard collection of old-fashioned furniture, some of it from noblemen's houses—none of these things could diminish the value of the fact that here the suddenly released cultural urge of the masses had

created for itself a collective home whose present form bore some marks of the impatience and vehemence of forward movement. But in the middle of the new Socialist City the foundation stone had already been laid for a future cultural centre whose well-lighted and spacious rooms—from the auditorium of the theatre down to the shooting gallery—will be fashioned of glass and concrete and surrounded by green trees.

The squat lettering of the slogans, pasted on strips of red cotton cloth, shouts challenges for shock work and competition, promises the overfulfilment of the quarterly plan and the delivery of hundreds of thousands of tons of coal "which we owe to the country from last year." "We builders of the great Kuzbas must fill the breach in the plan!" "Industrial Siberia must have a place upon the Union's Red Board of honour!"

The wall newspaper, richly illustrated, some of it typed, some of it written by hand, shows energy, humour and often talent. Its staff of worker and peasant correspondents is working above ground and below, in the barracks, on the railway and in the surrounding collective farms. A miner's wife who is nothing if not particular gives her impressions of the "Gomez" concert troupe from Moscow which was here not long ago. (In order to avoid any misunderstandings, I must explain that Gomez is not a noble Spaniard but an abbreviation for the State Trust for Musical, Open Air and Circus Entertainments.) Well, what did Gomez have to offer to the miners? A wheezy soprano, Gypsy romances (this musical curse of the country), an idiotic dance comedian, a slobbering folk-song trio, a conjuror, an asthmatic flutist and a youthful reciter who

specialized in false pathos. The correspondent writes: "Is this the stuff they dish up to the Moscow workers or is it a special program for Siberia?"

Halt a moment. This is the International Red Aid Corner. Here you may see pictures of the White terror and documents of the Red Aid. Bulgarian peasant revolutionaries hanged on the gallows. The answering letter of a German political prisoner from Sonnenburg. Hitler's death's head with its hogged moustache and the lovelock over the forehead. The Steel Helmets doing the goose step before Hindenburg. Pictures cut out from the A.I.Z. (*Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*.)

The tall windows were open. We caught a glimpse of the crimson sunset sky, cut by the black silhouette of a telegraph post with an amplifier fixed to it. There are twenty or thirty such amplifiers in the neighbourhood. The local radio was thundering out a Vienna waltz over the hills. They must have been playing the gramophone record at the station. In the background, in a saddle between two green hills like the humps of a dromedary, you could catch a glimpse of the tents where the construction workers were camped, and beyond, a tiny cross-section of the steppe, of the Siberian prairie, a hint of the endless spaces beyond.

The waltz music echoed among the hills of coal where the sunset dyed the sky a smoky red. And all of a sudden a brass band blared out the opening notes of the splendid and immortal Budenny March—blared them piercingly, somewhat impudently through the room. The miners' band was playing in the great hall. Everyone sprang up and we elbowed our way with hundreds of others through the entrance door.

On the front wall of the hall the pictures of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Voroshilov had been supplemented today by those of Liebknecht and Luxemburg. The great miners' production conference of the Prokopyevsk Mines was meeting under the slogans of the coming Anti-War Day and was moreover to be made the occasion for a demonstration of international solidarity.

We caught a glimpse of Roll and Mannik among a swarm of young people, and a group of girls with Nadya at their head were dragging Arnold along with them to act as interpreter between the youth of the two nations. Julius came this evening unaccompanied by Lena (she was unwilling to leave her house again before her baby came); he wore a clean coat and wide knickerbockers; he had made the two inevitable creases in the forepart of his cloth cap with an accustomed pinch of his finger and thumb; even Wegerich had taken off his fur coat and was sitting in an angular lumberjacket with sewn on pockets and a high collar, looking a comical figure on the platform next to Mitri Mikolayich, whose blue calico blouse today bore the enamel flag of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. Good Lord, the man was a member of the government! On the table of the Presidium with its red cloth stood half-empty tea glasses among a litter of cigarette ends. Behind the table sat four other old miners, a woman worker, two young people and, at the end of the row, Höniger.

As we entered, a Leningrad engineer was just beginning his speech, waving his well-kept hands oratorically. He was entrusted with the construction of the water-main between Kuznetsk and Prokopyevsk, and he was vainly endeavouring to justify the backward state of the work by "objective con-

ditions"; he demanded another eight hundred navvies and various other things, equally scarce. An old shaggy miner, chairman of the production sector of the trade union, answered him; he was very angry, and justly so; he looked like a great fat bird with its feathers ruffled, and his voice grated angrily as he spoke. The water supply at Prokopyevsk was a sore point with him. He heard the feverish pulsation of the steam pump in his ears as he spoke of the bad water that came from the marshes—it could hardly be used for the machine boilers, let alone for household purposes. He let the Leningrad man have it straight from the shoulder. Inactivity, inability! The engineer took his seat, his face was all red as though his opponent had been scratching his cheeks with this grating voice. But it wasn't only the voice....

Next to me sat Joachim Huth, the new intrepeter, together with his mother, an old woman worker. The Huths are German Siberians, a family of colonists from the Slavgorod region. We were sitting in about the tenth row. In front of us, crowded close together on the benches, sat the "new" miners—broad backs clothed in lined peasant jackets and caps of hare fur with hanging ear pieces. They were the new recruits who had come to the mines and a certain smell of the village still clung to them—a smell of timber, hay and damp earth. Children were clambering about between the rows. A woman gave her baby the breast, quite unembarrassed by the presence of the others. It seemed to be a last resort to keep the kid from crying. Now one of the mines' management got up to speak, a tall light-haired fellow who leaned forward over the desk while speaking and kept brandishing his oil-

cloth portfolio all the time. Even in the hottest moment of his speech, he never let go of this object, clinging to it as though it were a weapon. We listened:

"Yes, comrades, if only so many of the old workers hadn't left us, if only they hadn't run away to Kemerovo and Ansherka on account of insufficient food supplies here! In April we reached a hundred per cent output. Then, in the month of May, the devil sent us four carloads of brandy—it was all up with discipline at once, for two weeks on end Prokopyevsk went wild—a regular wave of wickedness! Well then, the organizations took a hand, and by June we had already worked up to 82 per cent and in the last six-day week we've been fulfilling the plan again. But we have to pay off old debts, we have to make good all we lost in the first half year. We've already picked up on the gobbing work, although we had plenty of filling-up to do, and we've piled up plenty of stone for the job, so that we are safe for the winter. That's a big success, comrades. Unfortunately we still haven't enough cranes, excavators and other machinery. By now we ought to have had pneumatic machines for all kinds of work at the coal face. If only we had them, it would be a blessing for us. Now about the transfer bridges. The loading front is too small, it holds up the transport. We wanted to get more gratings for the sorting of the coal and to extend the shipping bridge, but the timber that was being sent us has been shipped on by mistake to Kuznetskstroy, and up to now all attempts to get it back have been fruitless. Then again, our supply of timber for pit-props is good for exactly four days. We had to send off some alarm telegrams already.

The electricity supply is another weak spot. Let's hope the light won't go out tonight as it did last night at eight o'clock! It's lucky for us that we are soon going to be connected up with the transcontinental power system. Now a couple of words about the specialists. Our engineers have their time so much taken up with current "operative" work that no time is left over for them to do planning work. This can't possibly go on. Baumgartner, a good German specialist, is sitting in Novosibirsk, in the office of the Eastern Coal Trust; he was here for some time but he found the price of wine on the building site was too high for him, that's what, and so off he went. Professor Strelnikov, a great expert in the geology of the Kuzbas, doesn't give us much help either. Our Comrade Höniger has done great work. Since he has been here the miners have got used to handling pneumatic hammers and they never want to see the old pick-axes again. And to have broken down the old conservative habits—that's some achievement here. The foreign methods of work have justified themselves brilliantly. I welcome the proposal of Comrades Wegerich and Julius to organise German-Russian training brigades in shaft sinking.

"What we need most urgently is not only a small staff of mining mechanizers and special engineers but above all better utilisation of the machinery we have already. Mastering technique means getting everything out of a thing which it will give, and of that we know damned little as yet! It's just here that our German comrades can help us, if they will only take the initiative. With united forces we shall continue along the glorious path which the Party and the Soviet government show us!"

Höniger was sitting at the end of the long table facing the centre, and from the hall you could see the sharp but kindly profile of his face. For a long time and with ever increasing nervousness he had been playing with his yellow Koh-i-noor pencil and saying to himself: I shall have to answer in the name of the German specialists and technicians! And all the time he knew that he was a poor speaker. Now he got to his feet, stepped behind his chair and began: "*Genossinnen und Genossen.*" It was an unwritten law for him that ladies must come first. And having uttered these words, he stopped dead and glanced around the hall looking for help. He spied Joachim, but at the same moment Wegerich got up and promised to translate. So Höniger started off his speech and at once got entangled in a maze of those beautiful long German sentences which have no emergency exits. He liked to include logical arguments in his speech and to go off into explanatory clauses beginning with "correspondingly," "consequently," "nevertheless," etc. Before five minutes were up he had run himself into a blind alley and broke off abruptly. The audience, which had not understood a word, went into frenzied applause, for in the first place everyone liked Höniger, and in the second place it was quite clear from his gestures that he had accepted the challenge in the concluding words of the previous speaker and was taking something in the nature of a pledge.

As Wegerich began to translate, Joachim, Mother Huth and I went out. Immediately after, we heard the applause break out again, the doors burst open and the crowd came tumbling out to the buffet. Everything was noise and smoke at once. We three

drank our tea together and went outside into the fresh night air to munch our *wurst* sandwiches.

I was very anxious to get some more details about the German Thälmann Collective Farm from which the Huths had come. In response to the call to the collective farmers to come to work in industry, Joachim and his mother pledged themselves to work at Prokopyevsk for one year. The mother was working above ground, sorting coal on the shipping bridge; her son was called from the mine to the office the other day: "So you understand German well, Comrade Huth," "Yes, it's my native language. I'm descended from a family of German colonists." "Party member?" "Not yet. Candidate." "Wouldn't you like to help the foreigners here? We are looking for an interpreter?" "Not at any price. Not now." "Why so? It's a politically responsible post." "Well, I'm attending the study courses and I'm a member of the training brigade in the mine. In a month's time I'll be trained as a coal hewer." But it was no good. The bureau of the Party nucleus made it a question of discipline, and everyone was certain that Joachim would appeal to the Kuznetsk District Committee, or even to the Regional Committee of Novosibirsk, if need be; but at the last moment, quite unexpectedly, he consented. So now he was interpreter, and all the comrades were enthusiastic about him. The mines management praised his zeal and proposed that he be given a premium; within a few days' time he had created quite a different spirit among the group of German workers. Wegerich always called him "my son" and placed great hopes in him. Huth was a small young man, slender and energetic, not yet twenty-five years old, and the most strik-

ing thing about him was the quickness of his dark brilliant eyes and the extraordinarily pleasant, warm tone of his voice which immediately took hold of you by their melodious quality.

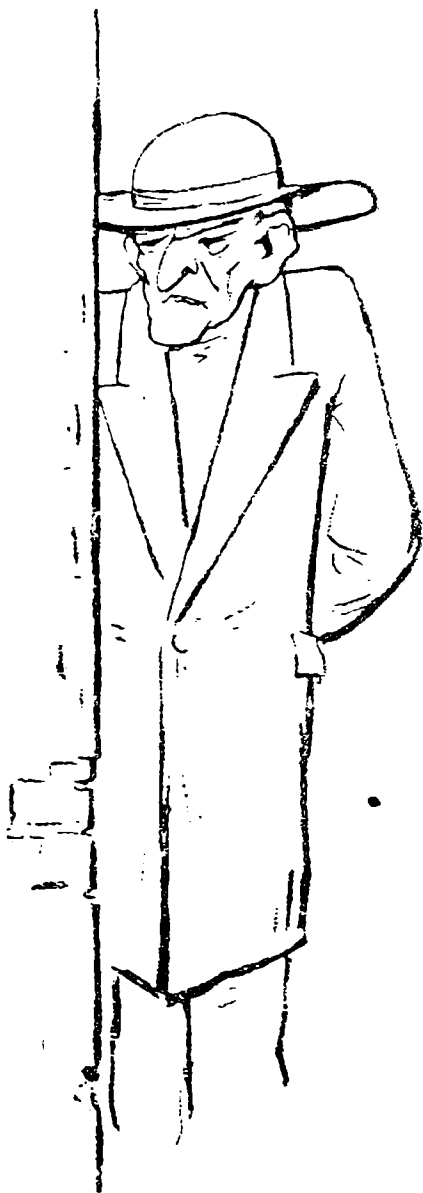
"The Thälmann Collective Farm," Joachim began, "lies near Issyk Kul, which means in Kirghizian the Troubled Lake, in one of the most fertile regions of Western Siberia. The soil is so rich that even the weeds spring up as high as a man's shoulder, and you have to stand upright on the cart in order not to lose your direction when you are out in the steppe. There are four village soviets in Issyk Kul. Each village soviet comprises several villages; ours for example comprises twelve and the neighbouring soviet seven. Today the four soviets together unite twelve thousand German collective farmers. In 1929 we had only 180 hectares of land and 32 farms; today we have 61 farms with 500 hectares. When we started we were eighteen families of farm hands from different villages with fifteen horses. Right in the first year we had a fire. The kulaks were at the bottom of it, or to speak more exactly, the priest. When he found that he could no longer inflame the hearts of his congregation, he decided to set fire to the hay barns of the collective farm instead. But the fire spread to the barns of some of the most devout members of his flock. Now the holy man is confined in the "monastery" where he belongs—in the Far North, on Solovki, the Island of Nightingales.

"The fodder was burned and part of the harvest was burned too. At that time we hadn't yet got a tractor. We had to borrow a plough here and a threshing machine there. In the second year we bought an old tractor—it cost 400 rubles and we

spent 1,040 rubles having it repaired. One of us became a tractor driver and was able to lend them a hand for fourteen days on the neighbouring collective farm, Red Flag. We had a very fine harvest; we delivered eight thousand poods of grain to the state and kept one thousand for ourselves. In the third year we handed over our tractor to the machine and tractor station and now we can borrow as many machines as we need from the M.T.S., including threshing machines and reaping machines.

"Last year, when there was a shortage of fodder, the government gave us sixty cows and a hundred sheep for the winter, and in the spring we had to return the cows well fed to the newly formed state farm, but we were allowed to have the wool and the milk during the winter and to keep the calves and lambs for ourselves. Next year everyone of us will have his own cow. We've got plenty of courage and we're becoming really well-to-do now.

Formerly all of us were landless farm hands from different settlements; we had to rent a few acres of land from the rich peasants at a stiff price. Then we received land from the District Committee for Land Distribution. The whole section is now collectivized 92 per cent and there are German collective farms



studded about the whole neighbourhood. The Thälmann farm is leading the Red Flag in the competition.

"What about the school? The school is located in the house of a peasant who has been active as a teacher for a long time past. But now the government is building us a fine school building. At first we had only clay huts, now we are building brick houses for ourselves.

"Six families have come to us from the Slavgorod Germans—all of them Mennonites. Here too there are some Mennonites and Baptists. The Huths are descended from German colonists in the neighbourhood of Odessa and most of the German-Siberian peasants in our district came from the Ukraine at one time or another; they are descended from the Württemberg and Westphalian peasants who migrated to South Russia in 1816, fifty years after the famous manifesto of the Empress Catherine, which attracted the first group of German colonists to the Volga steppes. In our district we also have many Volga Germans from those who were deported to Siberia during the winter of 1915-16 and who remained here. You see, the tsarist government during the imperialist war issued a decree declaring the German colonists to be "enemies in our midst," expropriated them and banished them to Siberia. Then the rich Mennonite peasants suddenly discovered that they weren't Germans at all—they were really Dutchmen and that the tsarist decree did not apply to them. Those who were able to persuade the local authorities by the arguments of hard cash were declared to be Dutchmen; but those who had no money were Germans and were forced to go to Siberia.

"The colonies here were much poorer than those in South Russia; they were poverty stricken settlements. But the harvest hands remained virtually without civil rights up to the time of collectivization. If poverty was the rule in the village, that did not mean that poverty ruled in the village. The ruling, even in the village soviet, was often enough done by the kulaks, and later on, especially in the collective farms, by the clergy. Our whole collective farm, except for the Party comrades, used to go to church every Sunday up till last year. Many of them would walk fifteen versts through the steppe even in the hot weather. As for the Communists, they regarded them rather as the wolf regards the wolf-hound. A couple of the young collective farmers were the first ones to break away from the church and the old customs. Then family after family came over to join us atheists; my late father's brother, Jacob Huth, a poor peasant, sent me his new hymn book and asked me in return to send him something else, if possible something which explained about communism and how it ought to be. And Maria Jertzen left her family because her father was still very religious, and Gottlieb Borss wanted to join the Party—his two sons had already been accepted as candidates—and then the Tiessens came over to us too—that was the biggest surprise of all. As for me, I had been anti-religious since 1924."

We were standing under one of the big hall windows. Joachim had produced a well-thumbed little book, and I read on the title page:

Confession of Faith for the Community of the Lord
Followed by Songs of Zion
Collected and published for Zion Pilgrims
Pocket Edition Third Series
Odessa, 1928

By Order of the German Section of the
All-Ukrainian League of Baptist Unions

And on the back of the same leaf I read:
"Ukrglavlit No. 137. The Lenin State Printshop,
Odessa, Pushkinskaya No. 18. Tel. 5-49. Order No.
2773. Issue 3,000 copies."

"One more proof of the famous persecution of
religion in the Soviet Union," I thought aloud.
"Prayer books published by a Soviet Publishing
House, running into three editions and printed on
such fine paper too!"

On the back of the pasteboard cover a short note
was scribbled in pencil: "Gave up praying forever
on the first day of the Collective Spring Sowing,
1931."

"The rich German peasants did a flourishing trad-
ing business too," continued Joachim. "They came
to the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway
with their pockets full of money. Even today,
right across Kazakhstan as far as Omsk, there are
still German settlements to be found along the
whole length of the railway. In alliance with the
Russian merchants, they drove away the Kirghizians.
They took the best land away from them and
behaved like the sons of Prussian *Junkers* in East
Africa. Only they had German servants to slave
for them, who were even more religious than their
masters. Then there came some of their 'German
brothers' from Austria—prisoners of war. They

were mercilessly exploited by the German kulaks, and if they tried to resist, their masters quickly sent for the mounted Kirghizians from the next village who instantly vented the rage they felt against the German masters upon the German servants. Many Austrians were beaten to death with knouts that way. The pious Mennonites, who themselves refuse to touch a rifle (their creed forbids them to do so), hired the necessary hangmen from among the despised 'heathen' Kazak villages in case of need.

"When Soviet power was established in Western Siberia, a great number of documents were found which bore evidence of the extraordinary passion for trading which prevailed among the old German kulaks. They even used to speculate on the exchange. The Mennonites love to hide things away in holes and corners. Once we bought a pair of old boots from a kulak, and when we looked into them we found some money sewn into the lining—several hundred rubles. Hiding things away like this is typical of the Mennonite kulak, and then the fellow always forgets a couple of his nooks and hidey-holes; for example, a rich old peasant named Zie-then went insane because he couldn't remember where in his house he had hidden 18,000 rubles in gold; so he died, and no one found the gold afterwards.

"Besides ourselves, some two hundred German-Siberian collective farm peasants have responded to the call for industrial recruits and come to work in the mines here. Sixty of them are with us in this place; but they find it difficult to get on with the German colliers—in the first place, there is the difficulty of the language, for we speak our own dialect, and in the second place, there are still all



sorts of prejudices on both sides, a sort of standoffishness which is naturally very unhealthy, but is bound to disappear as time goes on during the process of collective work.

"But you wanted to hear about the 'Back to the Fatherland' movement about which they made a noise a couple of years ago in the capitalist world.

Well, Issyk Kul was a district where the agents had an easy job finding prospects. Kulaks whose record was not too clear were anxious enough to pack and be off, and their hangers-on who let themselves be hooked were also quite plentiful. The Soviet government did not place any obstacle in the way of their leaving. Many of the Slavgorod folks thought better of it at the last moment and settled in the Ukraine instead of crossing the border. Those who went to Germany experienced bitter disillusionment there, as is well known. A strip of sandy soil somewhere in Brandenburg, forced labour camps, barbed wire and hunger—that was the promised 'Fatherland' which the home-comers found. The great majority were shipped off to South America; one or two tried to get to the United States (where there are also Mennonites, they say). But many of the middle peasants came back to the Soviet Union, some of whom then settled down in the Ukraine, while others, wiser after their experience, found their way back to Issyk-Kul, came back, if they were able, to their old haunts,

and today, as collective farmers, they have really found their way to their true fatherland...."

"Back to your seats, boys," Mother Huth admonished us. The intermission was over, the brass band was striking up, the official part of the meeting was beginning—the reading of the agreement for socialist competition between the German and Russian brigades of miners.

The miner, Mitri Mikolayich, member of the Soviet government, who journeyed every year to far-off Moscow to take part in conferences in the many-towered Kremlin, rose to his feet behind the red table, keeping his cap on, and stroked his long pointed moustaches. With a touch of ceremony, he put on a pair of spectacles for the occasion; he was not tall, but he looked quite solid and imposing, though Wegerich who stood beside him on the platform towered above him by more than a head.

Mikolayich read the text of the agreement. It spoke of punctual appearance at work, of building the galleries in the main shaft and the side shaft of the "Gigant" Mine—not less than 4.5 metres progress to be made daily; it spoke of mutual help by the two groups, of an exchange of experience and of the new training brigade which Julius was to organize; it spoke further of the mutual pledges taken—to remain in the Prokopyevsk Mines till the end of the Second Five-Year Plan, and many similar things. Mitri Mikolayich and Wegerich signed the agreement standing. That looked very imposing. Then Wegerich and Julius raised their fists in the Red Front greeting, the orchestra played the International. The whole audience rose to its feet and sang, each in his own language. And all languages—Russian, German, Ukrainian, Tatar—all languages

blended together into one melody, the anthem of the proletarian world commonwealth.

Höniger had come down from the platform and was standing next to me, sincerely moved.

"*Osushchestvivshayasya nadezhda*," said he. He was smiling but his lips trembled. I pressed his hand in mine and said "Here's luck!"

And in this handshake we felt the joy of an unspoken fraternization between very many and very different people who join hands in order to march forward together along a great common road. It is the joy which the true mining engineer feels when in the depths of the pit two galleries meet each other to a nicety; ever more clearly you hear the voices from the other side penetrating through the wall of earth, until finally the last thin partition falls down and two brigades stretch out their hands to one another.

CHAPTER SEVEN
KUZNETSKSTROY, TWIN BROTHER OF
MAGNITOSTROY

*The Flying Newspaper—Americans—The Scene
of Operations—The Main Street—The Head Book-
keeper Reads the Wall Newspaper—Commanders—
Works Locomotive No 32-12—Leaves From a Diary
—Ikons and Bugs—Bricklayer Opalko Stops a
Lynching—The Americans Again—Old
Kuznetsk—The Greybeard of
Dostoyevsky Street*

CHAPTER SEVEN

KUZNETSKSTROY, TWIN BROTHER OF MAGNITOSTROY

I

The Flying Newspaper

With a jerk the automobile started forward and sped out through the gates.

Every night, a little after twelve, it drove off from the brilliantly lighted block of buildings on the Strastnaya, Moscow's Passion Square, where the great rotary machines of the *Pravda* and *Izvestia* were humming their nightly oratorium, and in ten minutes it had put behind it the six kilometres of the Tverskaya and the Leningrad Highway. Opposite a black silent building, once the castle of Peter, it turned off to the right into the aerodrome.

Eight minutes later the mail plane started off with the matrices of the newspaper and flew towards the dawn. In the pale morning light it was already hovering—a tiny black T-shape—between the Volga and the Kama; it rested a moment at the foot of the Urals, on the aerodrome of Sverdlovsk, left the midday sun behind it and saw the liquid copper of the west Siberian rivers gleaming in the evening light; finally, at nightfall, it came in sight of Novosibirsk with its neat rectangles of lamplight beneath.

Three thousand kilometres eastward of Moscow's Passion Square the automobile with its freight of

matrices roared up the Red Avenue of the Siberian capital to the great State Printshop "Sovietskaya Sibir," and on the morning of the next day the Moscow *Pravda* printed on Novosibirsk paper was distributed to the four winds.

A package of 15,000 copies had to be taken back to the aerodrome to be stowed away in a small one-motor aeroplane whose shiny grooved aluminium body bore the inscription in black letters "Stalinsk, Kuznetskstroy." It carried a mechanic and one passenger on board and took a course a shade more to the southward than the dark line of the new railway running to Leninsk; then it flew for a little along the western rim of the Salair mountain range, crossed the edge of the Barnaul district, then the wooded mountain slopes near Alambai, left the mines of Guryevsk and the zinc smelting works of Byelovo on its left hand, caught a glimpse in the slanting rays of the afternoon sun of the colliery towers and scarred hummocks of the Prokopyevsk coal-field, and at last. . . .

At last behind the bare long range of hills, which looked as though they were kneaded out of rough porous leaven, there arose a luminous ochre-coloured fog, dense and amorphous as the twilight mist that hangs over the wild gorges of the Ala Tau.

And through the haze could be seen the glimmering shapes of mighty rectangles, a gigantic chessboard where the towering figures of the blast furnaces and the rows of air heaters reared their heads in severe and strict alignment, and behind them, in high relief, the delicately shaped glass roofs stretching for kilometres, glistening and sparkling in the sunlight. Above them, in the foreground, the vermilion red smokestacks waved a

welcome with their wisps of smoke as the pilot with his engine throttled glided down and circled above the landing place and the green mail truck came hurrying up to meet him in a cloud of dust....

2

Americans

"Is this Siberia?" asked Winkler, the German-American engineer.

Through the broad dusty windows of the sleeper he saw an undulating pastureland intersected by stretches of shady woods. The streams had cut themselves deep gorges in the soil. The ploughland stretched for kilometres on end over broad expanses. The crop was somewhat late this year, thanks to the summer drought, but it was still not without promise—a week's rain would even make it a good crop. Engineer Winkler had heard that the harvest here came four or five weeks later than in European Russia.

Time and again he opened his eyes when he saw the squads of tractors or the long lines of women at work, digging on the potato fields or weeding. "Collective farm," he thought to himself, and remembered how in Canada he had seen hundreds of farm labourers and many machines also toiling on such vast fields as these. Yes, but here something was missing—something which in Canada was as inevitable as the shadow to the post: the brown-clad riders in broad-brimmed cowboy hats and leather-laced leggings, the eyes and hands of the invisible master.

There were no such figures here. Here the masters could be plainly seen. The tractor driver was master, the hundred-headed—nay, million-headed

—collective farmer was master; the peasant women, bending their backs in long ranks, were here tilling their own soil. Nobody watched over them, nobody drove them on. They competed among themselves as only free human beings can compete, and before their eyes—as close and tangible as these morsels of earth in their horny hands—was the picture of well-being, earned through hard toil and struggle and coming nearer day by day.

To be sure, here too wooden watch-towers with Red Army men standing sentry were now and then to be seen along the railway track, and engineer Winkler had probably noticed groups of navvies working on the line, digging, shovelling, carting earth and laying rails, and the word had gone around in the train that these men were expropriated kulaks, former exploiters, enemies of the Soviet power, wreckers, incendiaries and bandit leaders. Their camps of tents were kept under guard, they themselves were watched over. But at the same time Winkler noted the way they were smoking and laughing at their work, how they chatted in groups and how the lads in the camps were strumming balalaidkas, performing Cossack dances and singing round the camp fires in the evening. "Yes" he said to himself, "if the convicts here were treated like those in our country, they'd have nothing to laugh about then...." And then he asked questions and found out that these people were paid wages, part in cash, part of it credited to them, and that they received premiums if they did more than their assignment, and that they were allowed to enter into socialist competition, to read newspapers, to write articles and to have their own theatre. And after a certain number of years they would again receive the full

rights of the working Soviet citizen, and then they would be allowed to choose whether to enter a collective farm or to work in a factory; they could become members of a trade union. . . .

Night time. Along the track at irregular intervals fires were burning; the train flashed by blazing bonfires, and when the glow of the fires vanished, the windows became black and reflected the three persons in the compartment.

Winkler was leaning back in his corner with eyes closed. George Gourtoff thought that he was sleeping. Mrs. Grace Gourtoff was yawning over her English magazines. But Winkler was not asleep; he was pretending to sleep in order to collect and sift undisturbed the new thoughts that were troubling him.

There they were, the six specialists from the United States, travelling to the Kuznetsk Basin via Leningrad. Their opinions and ideals were bright and picturesque, their moods as changeable as the weather. Three of them were going to remain in the coal mines of Kemerovo, one of them at the zinc works at Byelovo. And Winkler himself, together with his colleague Gourtoff, was bound for Kuznetskstroy. The common goal united them, but there was much that divided them too.

Gourtoff had had some disappointments in the trust in Moscow, and he spoke of the city where the telephone did not function, of the country which had not yet learnt how to run its railways, and of the people who were marching into socialism bare-foot and in rags "like the children of Israel going into the promised land." Winkler on the contrary rightly judged that in this country the forces of socialism had once and for all turned the scale, and

that it was no longer of decisive importance what the other scale contained. Winkler felt that the most essential thing was to be sought for elsewhere; he began to grasp that the world-wide significance of Russia's revolution lay in the new attitude of man towards his work and towards his working fellow-creatures. This was how he conceived it, and he tried to communicate this conception to the Gourtoffs. But engineer Gourtoff retorted that he had come over here in order to earn honest money and not to philosophize.

The compartment was drenched with the odour of Mrs. Gourtoff's perfume; her illustrated London magazines bestrewed the table, the floor and the lower berth.

In the morning Gourtoff would stand in the corridor looking out of the window, yawning nasally and watching how the telegraph posts flashed by in the milky swirls of smoke, how the festoons of telegraph wire dipped up and down, interlacing and criss-crossing in a hundred complicated patterns. The jolting of the wheels suggested to his mind a monotonous jazz melody, provokingly repeated over and over again, he grew irritated and gazed ruefully at his fingernails. He had had them manicured in Moscow, in the Grand Hotel, from whose windows you can catch a glimpse of two of the Kremlin towers.... And now they had grown again, these nails of his. How many days have we been on this darned train? It would have been a lot better to come by air. Yes, if only Grace hadn't protested. The sea crossing had been enough for her and she didn't want to have an air trip on top of that! And then she wanted at all costs to see the famous post in the Urals with "Europe" written on one side and

"Asia" on the other. But of course she had been asleep at the psychological moment and had missed the celebrated post.

Winkler was leaning against the bar at the neighbouring window, observing the landscape, which sometimes showed an amazing similarity to landscapes somewhere between Indiana and Missouri, and he asked himself: "Is this Siberia?"

And at once the question occurred to him: "Why do I ask that?" And he answered it himself: "Siberia for us has for ages past been something more than a mere name; Siberia—that meant exile, comfortless desert, cut off from the world.... And here what do I see? People at work, full of hope and courage, working hard and zealously on great common fields and growing sunflowers in their little gardens at home...." "And building blast furnaces too—blast furnaces before all else," he added, correcting himself.

They were travelling "International class" in their sleeper, but in truth every single one of the eight cars, "hard" and "soft" cars alike, was an international one. Not only the peoples of the boundless Soviet Union were represented on this train. And not only American specialists, though they too were not "hundred per cent" Americans (Gourtoff's father for example, a fugitive Russian anarchist, had changed his little son Grigory's name to George after reaching America). The international world of jobless proletarians had also sent its representatives.

In the next car on a wooden bench lay yet another from the States, likewise not a "hundred per cent" American—a dark-skinned giant, clothed all in leather, who was studying a Russian grammar for

English-speaking people. According to Yankee ideas he was almost a Negro. But not from Africa—he was from the Balkans. He introduced himself in English: “Odak, John Odak—the name is really Ivan, you can call me Ivan if you like. I’m a Croatian, from the Save. I ran away from home when I was eighteen, first not to have to serve in the Royal and Imperial * army, and secondly in order to make my fortune on the other side of the Atlantic.” But in the new world he had met his old acquaintance—poverty. And today, after sixteen years’ experience in all the coal-fields and several of the iron works of the northern states, all that was left him out of the misery and chaos of the crisis was his health—saved by the skin of his teeth.

“That’s all I possess,” said he pointing to a small hand-bag, which was as thickly pasted over with foreign customs stamps of all hues as a hoarding with advertisements.

“And this too, if you please,” he added and strained his biceps muscle so that the leather sleeve of his coat was drawn tight. “I’m an assembler. The last few years I’ve been employed in iron works.”

“And now you want to make your fortune in Siberia?” I asked.

“Yes,” he answered, “but this time it must be a new sort of fortune—quite different from what they call fortune over there. I understand that all right, I’ll be damned if I don’t. Over there, to speak confidentially, I was almost a Red already, member of the I.W.W., Industrial Workers of the World—you’ve heard about them I suppose? I lived like stupid Hal in Upton Sinclair’s book *King Coal*.

* I.e., The old Austro-Hungarian army.—Ed.

I'm reading that just now—wonderfully true to life it is, I've been through it all myself."

He told about mining foremen, pit overseers and mine police.

"I know what it feels like to be beaten up with a rubber club, I can tell you!"

He threw off his coat and stood there in the corridor in his blue work shirt, his powerful neck bared; it was night time and under the glare of the electric bulb he showed me the greenish bruises on his shoulders.

"Twenty-three days I've been on the road and you can still see the traces of the last lockout in Detroit."

And he went on to tell me stories that sounded like fables and yet were true—stories of the monstrous brutality of the ruling powers in the American class war, of hunger demonstrations in Oakland and Illinois, of bloody fights in Chicago.

And then he concluded: "Do you know what? During the whole journey here it's been as if I was going home, going home at last. And yet I've never been in Russia before! But it's a fact, even the language here reminds me of my childhood language. Can you believe it? I still hear it ringing in my ears, in the voice of my mother. . . . Funny thing that you never forget it in spite of all!"

I made the experiment of bringing the two Americans together in the dining car—the engineer and the worker. For a long time they spoke evasively. Something divided them like a thick cold sheet of glass. Odak noticed that Winkler was making spasmodic efforts at false cordiality, and he remained on his guard. Their conversation was like the first wary handshake of two wrestlers, who

circle around each other waiting for the right moment to close. The oft-repeated, half contemptuous "well then—?" of the assembler irritated Winkler, and when he himself once ended a sentence with the conventional "I'm so glad—" and with a sidelong glance noticed the ironic smile on his companion's face, he looked as though he were ready to burst out into some half-forgotten piece of trans-Atlantic rudeness, resembling not so much the courtly kid-gloved methods of the old world as the fisticuffs of the new one.

I soon left the two to their conversational duel, and when I saw Winkler again, he was more pensive than ever, almost downcast.

"I can't talk to workers," said he. "What's the matter with me? Do you know what this Odak just told me? You'll have to be born again if you want to live here—those were his words. . . . What do you think of it?"

"Yes, well you see, that's more or less true of all people who come from the other side."

"From the other side? You mean America?"

"Not at all. Not only America. The other side—that's the whole capitalist world, which has so frightfully crippled our way of thinking."

"Ah, you think. . . ." And after a pause: "Surely. As a matter of fact I was saying it to myself already. . . . But then I'm a lot too old for that, it seems to me, if this Odak is right."

"Old? What are you talking about! Here you are only old when you can't lend a hand and work. But it's just in order to lend a hand that you've come over here. Take a look at this country, where fathers and sons together have marched into socialism shoulder to shoulder! The fathers are made

younger by making the revolution. They become the comrades of their sons. Man creates the work, but the work creates the new man."

Engineer Winkler did not answer. But he gave me a searching glance and then paced up and down the corridor for a long time.

Suddenly he halted before me: "Do you know, I like this lanky fellow Odak tremendously. Do you realize what advantages he has over me? I don't know how to express it.... In Moscow I bought a copy of Stalin's *Problems of Leninism* translated into English. There is a passage there which says something about having to combine American efficiency with Russian revolutionary enthusiasm. I must have read that passage at least twenty times over, I know it almost by heart. All Americans who come here ought to read it. Odak has something of this enthusiasm, this *élan*. As for me, all I've got is the practical common sense of the average Yankee, it seems to me...."

I protested: "Now, now, you are doing yourself a great injustice there. Stalin also speaks of unprincipled business people, narrow-minded people, short-sighted people who have no wider horizons. Don't you remember?"

"Sure I do! Damn it, I've got enough ambition not to want to be one of that crowd! And I don't want to be one of the grabbers or business men either...."

From the Gourtoffs' compartment came the muffled fatuous bleat of the little portable victrola: "I Want to be Happy...."

The train was tearing full speed across the Beraba steppe.

In Novosibirsk Mrs. Gourtoff searched in vain for

a bottle of *Héliotrope du Pérou*, the perfume which she preferred for travelling purposes. Her husband comforted her. Sometime, when opportunity offered, he promised to take her from the Kuzbas to Irkutsk, where—as he had heard—a breath of Pacific culture penetrated. . . .

But engineer Winkler together with Odak strode through the straight main streets of the city.

"Americans of all nations, unite in the search for hotels!" he laughed.

Both of them were stiff after three days and three nights in the train, and they stretched their limbs with luxurious ease as they walked along. They were in excellent humour, like sailors who have been given a day's leave ashore; they spoke with a loud American twang, attracting the attention of the passers-by.

Winkler had in his notebook some addresses of factories where countrymen of his were said to be working, but the factories lay at great distances from one another. So they went to see the clubs and the schools. They went to the baths to take a shower. The shower baths were not working yet and, as in all Russian baths, you had to wash by emptying tin buckets of water over your head. This again made them feel good, they laughed and fooled about. They rubbed each others' backs with a fibrous bundle of stuff which looked like damp shavings.

Winkler noticed Odak's bruised shoulders.

"How come?" he asked.

At first Odak pretended not to understand and plunged his head deep into the basin. However when Winkler tapped him on the shoulder, he said with a shrug: "Aw, those little marks, you mean?"

W h y, that happened during the c r o s s i n g
One morning on the lower deck I had a boxing match with an Irishman. There was plenty of nose-bleeding and bruises. The hell of a fellow he was. Say do you want to have a go?"

And Odak sprang away, took his stand as though he were in the ring and raised his fists to the level of his chin with an exaggerated gesture. "Do you want to?"

Winkler shook with laughter: "S o r r y, but I'm not in form. The long journey makes you all stiff...."

They stood stark naked facing one another, and suddenly the cold sheet of glass that had seemed to separate them broke into a thousand fragments; it seemed to come clattering down like a gush of water—like the buckets of water they emptied over each other's heads.

And Odak could not resist saying: "Listen! I was kidding you. Those bruises are from the other side, that's what—a little souvenir I have from the cops in Detroit and their black-jacks. I'm a Wobbly, a Red.... Say, what are you, brother?"

"I?" Winkler stretched himself, stood for a



moment on tiptoe then sat down on the bench wet with soapsuds by which the empty buckets were standing. And he answered simply: "I'm a good specialist."

"Oho, Oho!" shouted Odak. "A good—? We'll have to see about that first, my friend!"

He smacked Winkler on the chest a couple of times with the palm of his hand. Both of them laughed like boys at play, and their laughter sounded good as it echoed through the room filled with steam and the splashing of water.

3

The Scene of Operations

"Is this Siberia?"

The great pillar of ochre-coloured dust rose slantwise into the afternoon sky. A cloud of dust as big as a mountain. It consisted of thousands of smaller swirls of dust which the wind bore in one direction and which intertwined like the swaying treetops of some great forest. At its foot lay the town. And this was no ordinary town.

The railway station, to be sure, consisted only of a couple of inconspicuous buildings. There was the usual plank platform and station bell, the usual warehouse and water tower. And yet this place was a terminus, a land's end. For here the Kuzbas railway ended for the time being, and beyond there were only the mountains. The railway that led to them was still under construction. And here there were six or eight tracks with points and sidetracks, where freight trains were being shunted hither and thither, whistling, clanging and puffing. Heat, dust and the smell of tar.

According to local time, the train had come in at three o'clock instead of at eleven. "In due course, of course," said Gourtoff sarcastically.

There had been no "soft class" on the Kuzbas line. In Topki the three mining specialists had taken their leave, to wait for the connection to Kemerovo. ("They'll probably have to wait a six-day week or so," said Gourtoff.) In Byelovo the zinc specialist had got out.

During the last part of the journey the train had gone at a snail's pace; every time they reached a double-track section they had had to wait for an eternity while endless trains jolted past them—timber, coke, iron ore, five-ton trucks, oil cisterns, pipes, cables and barrels of cement.

The automobile was not there. Gourtoff nodded with mock seriousness. That meant: "Of course it *wouldn't* be!"

The agent, who had been waiting for the foreigners at the station, and who had greeted them volubly in bad English, was obliged to hire a couple of droshkies whose drivers were only too glad of the opportunity of charging a higher fare.

First came the Gourtoffs' trunks. Then followed the Gourtoffs themselves, with Winkler, Odak and the agent bringing up the rear. The agent was an all too talkative young man with an undeveloped chin and an over-developed nose.

They drove off preceded by a couple of Ford cars and some thirty carts, all of them sending the dust flying and veiling the landscape completely. The leaning tower of dust gradually became less dense and vanished before their gaze, because they had already entered into it and it was no longer visible from the inside.

This was no ordinary town. As the newcomers approached nearer, they began to distinguish things more clearly. The background of dark hills against which funicular railways, quarries and grass slopes gradually began to stand out. In the foreground the mile-long front of buildings—completed, half finished, just begun. And little by little they penetrated into the cauldron of mysterious bubbling noises which seemed to proceed from apparently motionless objects, like the rustle and murmur of a forest in summer, audible even when the wind is still.

Now they could see the outlines of the two blast furnaces and of the Cowper batteries, massive cylinders around which ventilators and gas pipes pulsated feverishly. And across the building sites came the noise and long-drawn out shouts of men, who remained invisible meanwhile like soldiers in trench warfare.

Everything here was reminiscent of a battlefield—that was the thought which crossed everyone's mind when he came here first. The strategic ring of hills round about. Clouds of smoke and puffs of steam in all quarters. Barbed wire. Blasting and excavations. Searchlights piercing the fog. Gas vapours and rockets. Even the staccato shots of the exhaust pipes fitted into the warlike picture like the popping of anti-aircraft guns. And then this mysterious underworld of mine galleries! Many of them graded downwards to a dizzy depth like great inverted hollow pyramids, others resembling granite funnels in the rock. And these tunnels which were to contain the pipes and electric cables—a whole subterranean network of digging and tunnelling!

On the right hand beside the highway ran a stretch of railway line. Beside the railway line stood iron equipment structures waiting to be assembled, strewn around like the debris of an exploded bridge.

The ten parallel blocks of a new Socialist City protruded obliquely beside the road. Behind them was the desolate layout of an unfinished suburb, half buried in heaps and piles of building material. A whole town of rough unfinished buildings—from the distance it looked like a ruined city, like the shattered remains of a town after a severe artillery bombardment.

On this spot (the agent was repeating this for the one hundred and thirty seventh time in the course of his work here) on this spot four or five years ago (last summer, of course, he had said "three or four years ago"), well then, four or five years ago on this spot there was nothing here except a tiny village and a stretch of marshy lowland. The legendary Gorbunov valley. You could have shot wild ducks here. You couldn't do that now! When out hunting, you could have sunk in the marshes. You couldn't do that now either! There used to be some fairly extensive pasture lands for the small cattle of the Oirat and Khakassian nomads, who used to roam up and down the bank of the river Tom. Now the nomads had settled down in many different valleys; they were even beginning to organize themselves in collectives for animal-breeding and hunting.

And in front of you lay the foot-hills of the Ala-Tau, which means in Tyurkic Snow Mountains.

Yes, the mountains were still there, they were the only thing which remained almost unchanged. The

skylines were humpy like the cloth stretched tight over the bone ribs of an umbrella. But dynamite was gnawing holes in the mountains, liquid oxygen was tearing pieces out of them. Great steam navvies were biting into the earth. It groaned. A sound of rattling, scrunching and whistling came on the wind.

Engineer Winkler sat squeezed in sideways in the funny little cab. His shinbone was pressed hard against Odak's suitcase, his heavy handbag was sliding over to Odak's knees.

"Only five minutes more," the agent consoled them.

But Winkler was not listening; he was pursuing his own train of thought, threshing out ideas that were new to him: "The art of building presupposes the art of destroying. To be sure, we in the West destroy things too, and nothing remains but a heap of ruins. But here—here, when things are destroyed, it provides them with building materials, with matter and space for new work of construction...."

Odak was quietly whistling to himself, for all the world as if he were sitting in the street car which used to bring him to work every morning at Gary or Detroit. But he felt lighter at heart and more carefree than before.

4

Sapropelite and Liquorice Sticks

It was on August 4, in room No. 31 (or 61) on the third floor of the fourth house in the first section of the *Sotsgorod*—that means, the Socialist City—which was not yet really a city and did not as yet have anything very socialist about it.

House No. 4 was the "hotel". Here rooms were being allotted. Or, to speak more exactly, they were not being allotted, for they had already been allotted. In the hallway you had to thread your way between baskets, trunks, travelling bags and bundles belonging to the newcomers. On the bundles and bags the room-hunters themselves were squatting or lying. Many were asleep. What were they waiting for? Until a room was free? Not at all. They were waiting until someone would be given a room on the basis of a compelling "mandate" from the higher authorities; that would mean that not all the rooms were taken after all and consequently that the manager had been lying....

On the yellow painted door of our room the black inscription "31" had been crossed out in chalk and "61" had been written beside it. We had got this room thanks to a "mandate" from the Supply Department of the City Soviet. The "mandate" itself we owed to an order given over the telephone by Comrade Ivan Alexeyevich Borodin, who was the representative of Comrade Frankfurt, the generalissimo of this construction job, in all questions of housing and supply.

So, on the morning of this scorching August 4 all six of us were sitting together again. During half the previous night we had composed and sent off telegrams to our respective editors. Telegrams are generally short; ours were not.

Safar, who was still under the spell of Byelovo (zinc, lead, sulphuric acid) thought he had got on the track of some misleading statistics, of some "inflated figures" in the annual report of the Iron Works Administration, and lying face downwards on the bed, he was writing a lengthy report on the

subject with Abchuk's fountain pen. Into the tangled carpet of the Arabian script he was weaving a pattern of rows of Arabic numerals. Abchuk, too, wrote from right to left—Yiddish, in the Hebrew script—that was the reason why he lent Safar his pen. Both of them had the same characteristic hand posture while writing, reminiscent rather of a chiseller or an engraver, than of a writer. His report completed, Safar tore out the written pages from his notebook and stuffed them into an envelope.

The room was clean and spacious, but it had only four beds. A fifth mattress lay on the floor. So each of us in turn had to sleep once every six days wrapped up in an old Red Army coat, with some back numbers of the local paper *The Bolshevik of Kuznetskstroy* shoved under his head for a pillow. (Since the open-hearth furnace works has been started, the paper has been renamed *Bolshevik Steel*.) This was quite just and democratic and it served our brigade as a calendar, the respective dates being remembered by everyone only too well.

We took turns at sleeping on the floor, Abchuk and Safar took turns at using the fountain pen. The two Ukrainians took turns at playing on the single accordion. Each one of us in turn had to go once daily to the post office, which was temporarily located in an ordinary barrack of the "Lower Colony," and which was always full of people, smoke and excitement.

The Ukrainians were back from the forests in the north-eastern corner of the Kuzbas. Starting from Kemerovo, they had visited the oil lakes and sapropelite mines of Barsass; they laid some specimens of the wonderful bituminous coal on the table.

One sort looked just as if it was made of thin sheets of shiny paper pressed tight together; it was malleable and flaky, like puff-paste. Other pieces reminded you rather of waffle cakes; or they showed a fibrous tissue. Sapropelitestet, the geologists asserted, did not originate from wood masses, like ordinary coal, but from rushes and water plants of the carbon period. They weighed light in your hand, and the fire licked them up greedily like tinder. Then there was another sort besides—heavy, massive, with an oily glint in it. It was seamed with long irregular fissures, and it looked as though, if only you were strong enough, you could press the stone in your fist and the oil would come dripping out in tiny beads of sweat. This stone was not coal; it was a regular compact mass of congealed naphtha, tar stone and combustible slate.

The experimental plant at Kemerovo for the extraction of liquid fuel from the Barsass coal had already passed from experimenting to mass production. It was producing oils both light and heavy. One of its valuable by-products was a kind of building material—a sort of ash, which held just as firmly as cement.

The Ukrainians had lost one day through the following mishap: they had taken the cable ferry across the river Tom, and the steel cable had broken, not for the first time; the great ferry—a whole floating settlement with men and horses and carts—had been swept downstream for some twenty kilometres and had only just escaped a more serious accident. The Siberian proverb says: "*The harp-string is torn asunder...*"

We breakfasted downstairs at the hotel buffet,

drank tea and mead. The sandwiches were sold out, there was only pastry. And there were liquorice sticks and dried figs. So we ate the dried figs and the liquorice sticks.

5

The Main Street

High up above the glass walls and roofs, sparkling in the light of midday, stood the yellow orb of the sun. It did not hurt your eyes to look at it, it was so thickly veiled by the dust. The seething construction site—like a mighty symphony—was dominated by the great orchestral score of the Plan.

We know that the Sixteenth Party Congress has determined on the speedy construction of the Urals-Kuznetsk Combine. That later on the basic lines of the Plan were repeatedly changed and adjusted in accordance with the new possibilities created by the real successes of the first five-year period. We know of the grand agreement by which socialist competition was started between the great twin works, Magnitostroy and Kuznetskstroy, in 1930. Never shall we forget the deeds of the Kuznetsk workers and Young Communists, who turned the first heroic Siberian winter of 1930-31 into an incomparable epic of socialist labour. Shock brigades of enthusiasts blasted the iron-hard earth at fifty degrees of frost in order to lay foundations, built wooden shields for the scaffolding, and by dint of untold exertions kept the masses of concrete from freezing with open coal fires. They kept on unswervingly with the construction work all through the inferno of the long Siberian winter and proved to an astonished world that the Bolshevik building season has twelve months in the year.

The newspaper counts the days. It counts the time remaining. Every day, right under the heading on the front page, it warns its readers: So and so many days are left for the fulfilment of the quarterly plan! Every day is precious and is filled to the brim with hard work. Day and night are the same here. Every day—three shifts. Every shift—eight hours of concentrated hammering at the job. And every hour—a step forward in history.

We have read articles and pamphlets which tell us that Kuznetskstroy has become a city and bears the name of Stalinsk. Over a space of five square kilometres stretches the construction site of the main workshops in the first building section. The whole area of the main and auxiliary plants of Kuznetsk measures twenty-five square kilometres. Quite a big square this—five kilometres each way. And the rolling mill, for example, is to roll enough rails annually to reach from Moscow to Vladivostok.

No, the facts and figures do not escape our memory. But what are facts and figures when you come face to face with the real thing!

Right through the centre of this pillar of dust, to which a thousand swirls of dust contribute, runs the Main Street of Stalinsk. It runs like a complicated conveyor through the middle of this pandemonium of a thousand different noises. It is full of traffic and movement. It is the main street of a young industrial city.

When you cross the viaduct, and come close to the Iron Works, you can hear the Blast Furnaces humming like giant bee-hives. Their towering magnitude stifles, overawes you, makes everything else look small—locomotives, cranes, motor trucks, horse-

driven carts, warehouse sheds. The clear-cut, almost diaphanous towers of the Central Heat and Power Station proclaim abroad the daring genius of ferro-concrete. Its chimneys shoot skyward like giant speaking trumpets—swart, slender funnels.

To the right hand, behind a maze of side-tracks and switch-lines, auxiliary shops and warehouses, rise the sharp contours of the Steel Works, the Forge, the Foundry and the huge Rolling Mill.

A squad of monster machines comes thundering down upon us. Heavy artillery in the shape of eight caterpillar tractors. We study the direction of the wind in order to choose the side of the street where there is least dust. The choking dust pervades everything like a fog. Our faces are already grey. The dusty powder weighs heavy on our eyelids.

The heat is more stifling than ever. Every now and then we come to a booth with refreshments, where we greedily drink down whatever there is—mead, pear *kvass*, cranberry *kvass*, *narzan*. We have to stand in line. And every queue has its molesters. Even in Siberia. A man with strong horn-rimmed glasses, white tropical helmet and a bulging cartridge case slung on his left hip, shoves his way forward and causes a scene. Our brigade lets the fellow in between us, out of turn, and he quiets down at once. Then we pass on.

There on the left, behind the Blast Furnaces, the tall pillars of the Scrubbers raise their heads—giant metal retorts of the Chemical Works. The Coking Works is swathed in wisps of green-black vapour. The mighty coke and coal reservoir with its bare bulging walls reminds you of some white-washed Saracen fortress.

The street is strewn with bricks, pipes, boards, barrels; by the side of the street gape holes for mixing mortar and barrels of lime sunk in the ground like wells. Always we are pursued by the deafening rattle of riveting hammers, by the screeching scrunch and grind of the concrete-miners.

The street leads us uphill. The factories and their shops are left behind. Now we are on a level with their roofs.

We overtake a long chain of peasant carts full of clayey soil—you can hardly see anything but the horses' heads jerking up and down under the high wooden arch of the yoke. Then a couple of draught oxen hauling a cart full of stone slabs to the "Upper Colony".

Here it is at last, the settlement on the hill, all built of the same solid wooden houses with well-trimmed avenues in between, and here is Frankfurt Street, named after the chief of the construction job, and here is the little "foreign quarter".

We are on the sunny side of a green but treeless hill, which forms the northern skyline of the building site, and the sun is just setting over to our left. The slope of the hill is covered with vegetable and flower gardens, clay huts and arbours, which here form a complete suburb in themselves, something like a mountain *aul* in the Caucasus. Herds of white and black sheep are grazing nearby, to complete the picture, and here too comes a mule with bundles slung on the saddle, its rider wearing a Caucasian fur cap with his rifle hung aslant across his back.

We climb the last slope to the summit. Up here the steppe grass is swaying in the breeze. Hundreds of horses are grazing. A masterless spaniel is

roaming around; he sniffs at us, barks and vanishes.

Beyond lies a landscape of barren hills. Marshy hollows, treeless grass slopes scorched by the sun, with half obliterated scars of bridle paths intersecting them criss-cross and losing themselves somewhere in the direction of the bank of the Tom.

In the far background—a solitary hut, like a Tatar's cap dropped from the sky.

Stray herds of sheep, the screech of a bird of prey. And nothing else but butterflies, steppe larks, the soft hum of the wind.

And that's what it was like on this side of the hill, too—four or five years ago. Impossible to conceive it!

But then all these Siberian towns are like that. Their streets begin in the steppe, gradually lose its scent, its winds and wide horizons, become urban boulevards, clothe themselves in stone and asphalt, and again on the other side come to an end with the boundless skyline of the steppe.

But back there, to the southward, from where we have come—what a sight! Stalinsk unfolds itself before us, the city of a quarter of a million men, all of whom have their hands full of work. The city of steel. The city of all sorts of high-grade steel. The city of all sorts and conditions of men. Far beyond, to the left, we catch a glimpse of the river Tom, running like a naked sword-blade. The rocky bank beyond looks pale and dim in the twilight.

The days have grown perceptibly shorter. One hour more, and cool gloom will have descended over Stalinsk. The town begins to light up in the falling darkness. One after another the three zones of the city—the factories and building site, the

“Lower Colony” and the “Upper Colony”—put on their sparkling diadems of lamps. And beyond them in the distance the Railway Station and the Garden City follow suit. The gleam of fire over the smokestacks and the red sheet-lightning of the Blast Furnaces grow more vivid. Searchlights twinkle. A drenching rain of lights. The mile-long rows of lamps merge swiftly into a light pattern. Under the cross-fire of the searchlights the buildings seem to move. The glass roofs, illuminated from within, suddenly seem like great casting moulds full of white-hot molten steel. The rivers of light merge more densely; the glittering network of lamps draws its meshes closer. The lights heave, sway, converge into a Milky Way of glistening electricity, stretching right across the shallow valley. The Main Street of Stalinsk.

And night does not muffle the sounds. The roar of the Rolling Mill is like the dull rhythmic beat of breakers on an invisible beach. The welders and riveters do not abate their noise, the concrete-mixers screech and grind as before. From all sides at once comes the rattle of the chains of the excavators—these “great, wise, good beasts.” The pneumatic hammers perch like metallic woodpeckers on the steel structures and rattle away breathlessly, uninterruptedly. Motor horns, sirens, whistles busily continue their talk. Bolshevik work, which knows no winter, does not submit to the night either. The shift comes to an end, the work knows no end. Day and night are only changes in the weather. What difference does it make—wind, sun, cold, dust, darkness, rain, heat, snow? These changes come and go. They are intractable, but they must obey! This shock-work here is stronger than they. All instru-

ments are tuned. The proletariat is playing its symphony. Nothing, nobody, can drown it. It's orchestra is gigantic. And its Party is conducting—the mightiest Party in the world. You can see and hear this aright when you stand on the Dnieper Dam, on the mountain of Magnitogorsk, or here, on the hill above Stalinsk. Elsewhere too.

Clear above the sleepless city soars the great orchestral score of the Plan.

6

*Bookkeeper Filippov (or Ippolytov) reads the
Wall Newspaper*

Three causeways run in a fan-shape through the "Lower Colony". At the point where they converge at an acute angle, they form a level square—the forum, so to speak, of the new city.

Here, almost in the geometrical centre of Stalinsk, stands the house of the Works Management, a three-story building consisting of a central block and two side wings running off symmetrically at an oblique angle. There it stands, a plain box-like building with great windows, run up hastily and without much regard to architectural design. A matter-of-fact, purposeful building—in a couple of years one can safely build on another wing or add a fourth story and its beauty will not suffer much from the addition.

All day long the house seethes and hums with throngs of people. The porch is besieged with automobiles and drozhkies. Stairs and corridors are every day trodden by tens of thousands of pairs of Russian felt boots, bast shoes and hob-nailed peasant boots, by galoshes, soft American high boots, sandals and city shoes, both local and foreign. The linoleum

mainland of the floors is being eaten away by ever broadening lakes and gulfs of worn spaces. In narrow partitioned rooms, behind doors and thin walls, countless typewriters are tapping. At the office windows stand double lines of workers, waiting their turn. Everywhere there are large wooden telephone booths of an antediluvian system; first you have to turn the handle, then give the number, then turn the handle again, then speak, and then turn the handle once more. (To be sure, this system has one advantage over the Moscow telephone—namely, that your conversation is not disturbed by the radio.) The office workers cling to these telephones perpetually. The receivers, pressed continually against hot ears, have no time to cool off during the day.

The walls are richly decorated with maps; they are covered with statistical diagrams, figures and specimens of minerals or metals. A grey-haired head bookkeeper, whose pale ashen moustache is tinted violet blue from ink or from indelible pencil, halts before the new wall newspaper. Paper and pasteboard are still damp from the sticky masses of paste and glue, and the head bookkeeper is reminded of cream cheese by its appearance. He is a little short-sighted and follows the lines with his index finger as he reads. He reads the headings. Many of them are long. All of them conclude with an exclamation mark:

“Right of Way for the Electro-Welding Process!”

“Mobilize the Inner Factory Resources! Collect all Utilizable Metal Waste and Hand it in to the Old Metal Yard!”

“Kuznetskstroy Must Break Dnieprostroy’s World-Record in Concrete Mixing!”



"The Inventors' Bureau (B R I Z) Is Asleep! Who Will Invent an Apparatus to Wake it Up?!"

"The Komso-mol Has Taken the Seasonal Workers' Barracks Under its Patronage. Out to the Cultural Campaign with Book and Broom!"

"The Delegates from Magnitostroy Have Arrived. Today Begins the Checking-Up in All Shops of How the Great U.K.K. Competition between the Urals and Kuznetsk Is Being Fulfilled!"

"More Attention to Housing Construction! The Building of Workers' Houses Is Lagging Behind. No Factory Building without House Building!"

"Newly Arrived Workers Often Obligated to Hang around the Building Site for Days on End Looking for a Place to Sleep!"

"A Carload of Dynamite Left for Two Days without Guard!"

"The Engineers' and Technicians' Section (I.T.R.) of the Trade Union Takes Up the Challenge for

Socialist Competition from the Foundry Workers with Militant Comradely Greetings!"

"Brigadier Karpov Sixty Years Old. Proletarian Greetings and Best Wishes to a Fighter and Veteran of Soviet Metallurgy!"

"The Head of the Bureau for Safety Technique and the Prevention of Accidents Bureaucratically Turns Up his Nose at Workers' Proposals!"

"The Party Member Titov (Department for Mechanization) Refuses on Principle to Sign Up for the Industrial Loan and Demonstratively Throws the Subscription List Under the Table!"

"The Komsomols of Barrack No. 142 Have Founded a Living Commune. Barrack No. 142 a Model Barrack for Tidiness, Cleanliness and Hygiene!"

"Irresponsibility in Housing Construction. The Formulists of the Supply Department are Speculating on the Difficulties and Allowing the Incompleted Houses of the Socialist City to be Prematurely Occupied!"

"Fifteen Concrete Pipes Badly Damaged in Loading. Bring the Culprits before the Comrades' Court!"

"Rolled Steel is not Steel which is Rolled, but Steel which Shows no Blemish after Rolling!"

"The Department for Cadres Relies upon an Automatic Influx of Female Labour Power. Instead of 40 per cent Women Workers Attending Courses, we have only 21 per cent! In the School for Workers' Youth of the Foundry Works only Two Young Women Workers are Attending the Course!"

"Wreckers on the Railway. Two Hundred Barrels of Cement Arrive All Wet!"

"The Lower Colony Is Misusing Not Only Building Timber for Heating Purposes! Barrack Walls,

Doors, Toilets, Wooden Fences Are Being Burned for Fuel. More Vigilance on the Building Sites!"

"Thirty-two Accidents in Factory Transport during the Last Decade of July. Of These, Twenty-One with Motor Trucks. Eleven on the Railway. Put an End to Criminal Negligence in Driving!"

"For the Start of the Harvest Campaign the Workers of the Central Heat and Power Station have Sent a Brigade to the Collective Farm under their Patronage (the Agricultural Commune *Ward of Kuznetskstroy*, Bysovsk Village Soviet)!"

"The Qualification of our Older Cadres of Workers Is Still Utilized Miserably. Comrade Zinitsyn, A Trained Electrician, Specialist in High Tension Motors, Sent here from the Nadezhdinsk Works, was first assigned to the Forge, later to the Fire-Clay Works, and is at present Working—as a Roofer!"

"Technique for the Masses!"

"High Time to Lay In Winter Supplies of Ore, Wood, and Cement!"

"Alarming News from the Power Station! The Damaged Turbo-Generator Still Not Repaired. Stoppage Threatened in the Main Artery of the Combinat!"

As he reads the last sentence, the head book-keeper feels that his heart too has missed a beat. The wall newspaper is extraordinarily rich in material, and it reaches from above your head almost down to the floor. You stand on tip-toe to read the topmost headlines, and involuntarily sink into a deep knee-bend while reading the lower columns. This gives you a little physical exercise combined with mental edification.... The grey-haired book-keeper is now crouching over one of the lowest

head-lines and pressing his beringed hand against his waistcoat. His marriage ring is an unusually thick one, almost like a little golden barrel; his waistcoat is of black shiny taffeta, studded over with white spots—its style shows that it dates back to the pre-war period. But his heart is a Soviet heart, and he himself, even though not a Party member, is certainly not “entirely non-Party.” He loves “his” combinat; he is proud of the growing works and their victories, they put new life into his old body, and he would like to run over to the power station right away himself, but his curriculum is strict and his organism is weak. He walks away, head bent slightly forward.

In his office room, as in all office rooms, a comical little clock is hanging on the wall—a painted peasant clock of the most primitive design, with a brisk little pendulum and a glass weight. Air bubbles are enclosed, apparently forever, in the massive green glass of the weight. “That’s the lost time hovering in there,” a peasant said once. The bookkeeper looks at the clock and sees that he has wasted half an hour’s working time. He will make it up after the regular working hours. It has not been lost entirely. Rapidly he jots down in his notebook with moistened pencil: “Zinitsyn—power station,” strokes his moustache with his violet-tinted hand, and turns with a sigh to his ledger.

A conference of shock-brigaders is to be held shortly in the power station. The grey-haired non-Party head bookkeeper (he is called Filippov, or Ippolytov) will attend it and will lend his voice—no, fight—to see that the misused electrician from Nadezhdinsk ceases to hammer tinplate and cardboard over roofbeams, that he helps to mend the

damaged turbo-generator instead.... And a host of other plans passes through his mind as he rattles the black and yellow balls of the abacus to and fro. This new wall newspaper is damned exciting!

To be sure, all the plans and deeds of Filippov (or Ippolytov) are small things when compared with the scale of the U.K.K. But the man feels that this is his own cause, his duty. And after all: Small deeds make the great work.

7

The Commanders

The house is the headquarters of an industrial army. Its working day is a fever curve, the worst time is towards evening. Production is war. Orderlies come and go. In a large room in a corner of the third floor sits Comrade Frankfurt, the Generalissimo of Kuznetskstroy.

It has been astonishingly easy to penetrate to his room through that of the secretary, but we have been asked to be as brief and to the point as we can. Now we are sitting face to face with him.

Comrade Frankfurt is a man of middle height; in the middle forties. He looks very upright and sturdy. An honoured commander of socialist industry. With his severe, almost military clothes and bearing, with the gestures which sparingly yet impressively accentuate his speech, he gives the impression of a type already hall-marked in history—the Socialist Commander. Nor does this conflict with the scientist's spectacles or with the powerful furrowed forehead of the brain worker. It is just this close interlocking of the scientist and the strategist which forms the essence of the Bol-

shevik leader's personality. Between him and us stretches the green-brown expanse of the vast writing table—almost suggesting a replica of the building site. Piles of books, papers, pens and pencils lie about in that apparent disorder which is really order in revolution, order coming into being. On his left hand stand three table telephones of modern design. One connects the chief of construction with the central office of the administration, another with the Stalinsk telephone system, while the third connects up direct with Novosibirsk. Over his shoulders tower two carved lions chiselled in the ebonized wood of his armchair.

The broad windows open up views in two directions—over the works, and the building sites. Between the new buildings wind-spouts of dust whirl continually and sweep across the square. The window panes sift the mixture of sun, wind and dust, letting through only the sunlight, which rests on your knee, warm and caressing as a cat.

He passes his hand through his thick hair which is just turning grey.

"Please observe above all the dynamics of our plan. The plan is our law. But even as it is being put into effect, the law itself changes. In other words, our luck—and in a certain sense also our misfortune—lies in the fact that the more rapidly and tempestuously we build, the more tempestuously and swiftly do our plans grow. Four years ago we reckoned the capacity of this iron works at 430,000 tons of pig iron a year. In the following building season we increased our demands to 505,000 tons. And now the program for our works has been finally fixed at 1,200,000 tons as a minimum demand. You can easily understand that with such hectic

development the original confines—I mean the actual topographical confines, within which we are carrying on our work here—have become too narrow for us. Hence this terrible crowding together of objects in the ground-plan which has so surprised you, and this chaos of men and materials and holes in the earth which makes it so hard for us to manoeuvre quickly.... One million, two hundred thousand tons of pig iron, 1,450,000 tons of cast steel and 1,130,000 tons of rolled products. And our assignment for 1934 is 1,500,000 tons of pig iron. The further we advance towards the goal, the further forward do we set that goal from ourselves."

With rapid steps his assistant and deputy, engineer Borodin, has entered. He lays down a heavy portfolio on the table. We recognize him by his voice, for we have already spoken with him over the telephone. He is tall, lean and clear-eyed; he gives one the impression of being chiselled, ground out of steel. You have the sensation that energy makes him quiet and cool, that he must sound like metal.

He greets us as old acquaintances. (There are three of us present—Safar, Abchuk and I.) "People who write," he says smiling, "have power in their hands. Writers have been here before, of both great and small calibre. All of them have written a lot about us. That's all very fine. But few of them have thought concretely about our needs when they wrote. We urgently need workers. We urgently need technical skill. We urgently need knowledge and discipline. Try to write, I say to all of them, in such a way, that skilled workers may come here readily, with enthusiasm, determined to fight, and in large numbers! You must instruct people and arouse

their enthusiasm. And then besides, we are suffering from the dawdling of many works and factories which are supplying us with building materials, iron structures, machines and means of transport. Kindly write in such a way that those factories may be compelled by the public opinion of the whole country to deliver their stuff on time. Don't exaggerate our difficulties, but don't conceal them either. It's a fact, reporters and journalists have been here—they came here in hundreds. They came here in brigades and in battalions. Every one of them made us golden promises—he was going to fight for Kuznetskstroy, to convince people, to see things got done. . . . And hardly had he left, by train or by aeroplane, when all he could remember was—magnificent blast furnaces, magnificent brigadiers, splendid workers and a splendid blooming mill. Yes, they've already told the story in all languages and sung it in all keys—the story of how we've blown in the blast furnaces of the first building section, of how five openhearth furnaces are producing steel, of how a gigantic blooming mill is working, of how our canal with its pump works has a capacity twice as big as the whole water system of the city of Moscow. But what they didn't think worth mentioning was how we built the blast furnaces, the air heaters and the two coke batteries, installed them and covered them with fire-proof casing, almost with our bare hands, and how even today we are still sorting and pulverizing the ore almost with our bare hands. And the few who did think it worth while to mention it, saw only the heroic side of the business. But that's not the only important thing. Not all the mistakes of our planning workers, the delays of our suppliers, and

backwardness of our transport system can be made good with heroic self-sacrifice and with bare hands—besides which there is a shortage of these bare hands. Our first stage was: heroism *instead* of technique. The new, higher level we have reached must have as its motto: heroism *plus* technique. The shock tempo at which we are working demands imperatively—more cranes, more steam navvies, more locomotives, more cars, more auxiliary motors, more electric current! And of course—more organization and discipline. Yes, it's just these things which ought to interest you more than the outward magnificence of the thing. It's just this which you ought to tell the world about. The rest speaks for itself. . . . What Marx says about the philosophers holds true, it seems to me, of the writers of the revolution. I mean to say: the actual facts have been described enough and enough praise has been spent on them; the point now is to push things on further!"

8

Works Locomotive No. 32-12

Side by side on the floor lay three strips of red cotton cloth. Sprawling over them—deathly serious and oblivious to all else—two Komsomols were lying on their bellies. They were pasting great letters cut out of white paper on to the red cloth. Slogans. Two of the strips had already had the letters pasted on and in the spaces between the two Komsomols you could make out four fragments of words which are internationally understood: CTATOR, OLE-TAR, RANSPO, and ISCIPLI. Quite clearly, the connection of ideas was between the dictatorship of the proletariat and discipline in the transport system. And the purpose of the slogans was to make

the walls of the railway depot into walls which spoke, walls which admonished. To use the expression of Gerassim, the senior foreman of the line, these slogans were to become a "writing on the wall" for all loafers, idlers, absentees from work, wasters of fuel, hooligans and drunkards.

Fate had given both Komsomols the same first name—Alexander. In order to distinguish them, one was called Sasha, the other Shura. And if you repeat "Sasha-Shura" several times over quickly, you will get a phonetic picture suggesting their profession: engine-drivers.

For the time being, however, they were not yet skilled drivers; they were only learning the trade. Each belonged to a different brigade of drivers, every brigade being assigned one Komsomol as a pupil. Thus, every one of the narrow-chested shunting engines of the Stalinsk depot was a sort of trade school on wheels.

As soon as Sasha saw me, he sprang up and led me out of the depot, violently jerking his arms and stumbling over a couple of rails. Then he hopped forward in uneven leaps over the unevenly laid sleepers of the railway track and finally, with his arms akimbo, began to balance on a rail like a rope-dancer, without once turning round to look at me.

Soon we were standing before foreman Petro Yermolaichenko, brigadier and shock worker of the depot, twice awarded premiums. The sunlight glinted on his black leather jacket—that same jacket which yesterday, when we first met him, had shimmered blue in the beams of moonlight. Petro could not have slept more than three hours; during the night he had wanted to do some extra repairs, and



he must have really completed them, for he was now greasing his locomotive No. 32-12, to an accompaniment of friendly growls, poking the long stork's beak of an oil-can between the wheel-spokes and bars in order to reach all the bearings and axles.

Petro's machine is one of the forty or fifty shunting engines of the Kuznetsk works railway—engines, which the local workers call with friendly sarcasm “kukushkas” or cuckoo machines. Petro's machine is an ordinary four-axle “Compound,” with a tender. The works railway also possesses some specimens of another model which

has proved its good qualities in a confined shunting space; this is a three-axle “tank engine” without a tender, but with bulging coal containers running along the boiler like the cheek-pouches of a marmot.

Petro wipes off the machine oil from his black hands with a wad of tow and accepts my “*propusk*,” the pass signed by the Kuznetsk transport director. Sasha and the fireman are already on the foot-plate. We climb up too and start off.

Petro is big and broad; according to the examining commission which has given him a certificate of psycho-physical proficiency, his chest can hold nearly six litres of air. Now he examines the manometer, shifts the lever, releases the valves and pulls the cord of the steam whistle. The wall-like leather expanse of his back obscures the view of the switchboard. Next to it, on a black board, is a plan

showing the assignment of the brigade. Today's assignment for locomotive No. 32-12 is 87 kilometers; but Petro intends to make 112 kilometres this shift—that will mean overfulfilling the plan by 29 per cent. At the same time he intends to economize 11 per cent of his quota of coal. These are his usual counter-assignments. And only locomotives No. 18-85 and No. 25-35 (the latter is that of the Komsomol brigade to which Shura belongs) have now and then reached higher figures in competition with No. 32-12.

The area of the Kuznetsk Works is covered with a network of railway track some hundred and sixty kilometres long.

This maze of rails, like a delicate artery system, stretches its ramifying feelers right into the heart of the individual workshops and departments. It brings the factories nutritive substance and takes away finished products and scrap. Every day from 120 to 200 freight trains come in along the Kolchugino branch line, and there have been times, when the number was as high as 400. (The passenger trains, as I heard in the supply department, bring about 1,500 people daily and take about 1,200 away.) The Kolchugino branch line is sloughing its skin, changing into the main line—the iron river of the Kuzbas. And the ramifying system of the works railway must be viewed so to speak, as the delta into which this iron river debouches.

"Yes, we have to keep pace with the freight, cope with it somehow," says Petro, as he operates the lever handles and gives Sasha brief instructions.

Going at full speed, we have described a quadrant around the upper building area.

"Did they tell you?" asks Petro, and points with

his hand to a city of scaffolding. "Here, and here, and here, there used to be three villages—Krassnaya Gorka, Chernoussovka and Bessonovka. These three villages were loaded on to railway cars one fine day. Everything—houses, stables, cattle and whole streets were shipped off. They were taken off up the line and planted down twenty versts from here. Now they've been given better soil and a state subsidy and are collectivized."

Sasha gives three short shrill whistles and puts on the breaks. We have reached the switch-tracks of the Kuzbas railway. The tinplate arm of the semaphore signal rises. Slowly we clatter over points, thread our way between long freight trains, shunt to and fro until eleven cars have been coupled on to us. Our freight consists of small iron structures, bricks, planks. Finally they couple on a heavy appendage—three cars of ore, which arrived from Magnitogorsk yesterday (on the sides of the cars the words: "Send back quick. Urals, station Chelyabinsk!" have been smeared in chalk with evident haste).

"Machines, automobiles, cranes—that's clumsy freight to handle, takes up a lot of room. Ore, again, is difficult—you can't make full use of your loading space, and you can't pile it high either, because of the weight limit...."

We turn on to a new track, clatter over a small bridge. The switch-men with little red and green flags run to and fro, whistle and make signs. Then we turn off again to the left.

Petro turns to me. His pock-marked face is moist. He pushes back his cap on to the back of his head and wipes the sweat from his brow. You can feel the heat from the fire-box and the boiler;

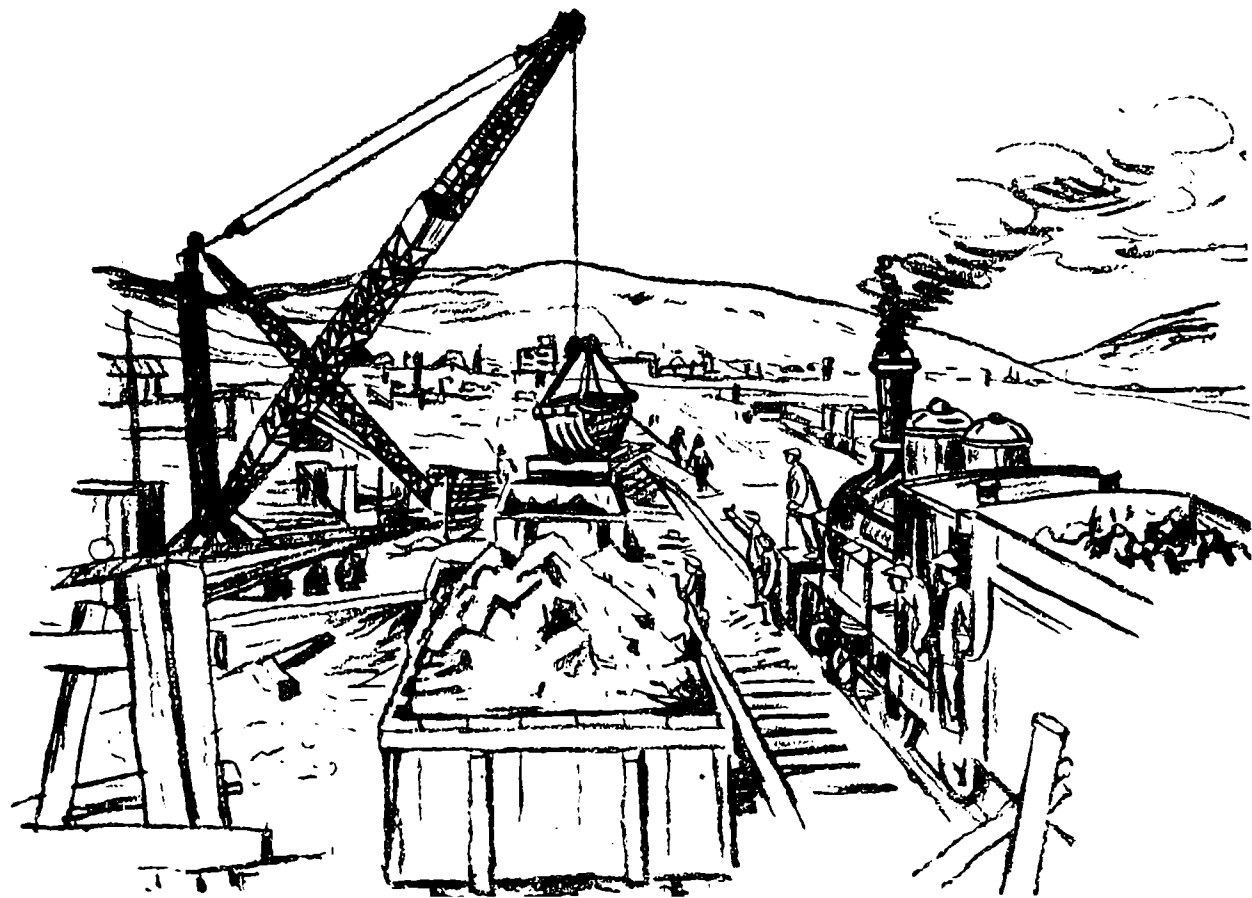
it makes the oppressive summer weather even more stifling.

"Do you know Tomsk, for instance?" he asks suddenly. "There's a town for you—didn't want to have the railway for a long time. That's the reason it wilted away.... But you take Novosibirsk on the other hand. See how that town has shot up, and all because it kept close to the railway! And a great ant-hill like this Kuznetskstroy, which makes iron and rails enough to girdle the earth with—this place itself has less than fifty locomotives, and what locomotives! Nothing but these 'kukushkas'—you can see for yourself, always a dozen of them undergoing repairs at once. As for cars, we've only got 500 of our own and 450 hired from Tomsk railway administration. All that would not matter if only it wasn't for this jam on the building sites. In the workshops of the section that's been finished—the coke, the blast furnaces, the open-hearths, the smelters and the rollers—there things are going ahead, there they're switched on the right track. But you take the new buildings, all this muddle and mess that there is! That's a thing the real railway man hasn't got to cope with for example. All at once out of a clear sky you find a heap of bricks, gravel, clay or some other muck dumped down across your track. Stop! Another time you find the track has been undermined overnight, a huge ditch has been dug, and where yesterday there was a solid embankment, to-day the rails are left hanging in the air.... You have to be able to use your wits and find a way out all in a split second, for time won't wait. Our brigades work on strict cost accounting. Time's worth more than money, for time can't be made."

We have reached the point where the new highway of the "Lower Colony" is being built. On a parallel track to ours stand cars full of freshly dug earth. Suddenly—a jar. Sasha has brought our train to a standstill.

"There we are again!"

Ahead of us, less than fifty metres off, stands a giant dredging crane on our track; it lets down the iron claws of the dredger into the torn soil of a clay hillock, holds up the booty on high, swings its mighty arm sideways and opens the fist of the



dredger exactly over the car which is being loaded with earth. The clay drops with a dull thud. Here a hill is being carried away in order to celebrate its resurrection elsewhere in the shape of an embankment. . . .

Petro does not hesitate for more than five seconds. Then he begins backing the engine, pushes back the fourteen clanging and jolting cars with frequent whistling to the next switch points, has the points changed, makes some quick adjustments on the hot switchboard, while Sasha leans far out over the rail of the footplate to supervise the course of the operation.

Five minutes later we are rolling along the third reserve track past the snorting steam navvy.

"Why didn't I simply shove the crane out of the way with my engine to clear the track?"

Petro has rightly anticipated my question. And he tells me why: "Because I calculated that that would take me twelve minutes, whereas this way I lose only six."

We slow down as we enter the area of the new factory buildings. We have had the three cars from the Urals uncoupled near the great ore storehouse, where the temporary waresheds are being removed. We pass by the great building of the factory school. Suddenly we stop again.

"Hello! What the hell's up now?"

This time a great pile of square-cut oak beams or posts has fallen on to the sidetrack owing to haste and lack of room from a freight train which is just starting to move on. Two five-ton trucks are already standing there with purring motors, and six men are endeavouring to load the heavy beams on to them.

Petro gives a signal, and all four of us jump

down and lend a hand. Ten men naturally finish the job in no time. The track is free.

"So that's what our day's work is like," says Petro as we drive on. "Our duty? No, of course, it's not our duty formally speaking. If there's an obstacle in front of the locomotive, well then the ordinary engine-driver—or the bad one rather—simply drives back and has done his duty in the formal sense. Then the locomotive goes another way and does other work, the program is interrupted and time and steam go to the devil. The shock brigadier acts different. He climbs down from his pedestal and clears away the obstacle, with his own hands if need be, but he can always find people to help him at the job. There are plenty of that sort among us now.... We're running into obstacles the whole day long. And then all the buildings and shops want you to put down the stuff as near as possible to their doorstep! And all the time you have to keep as far away as possible from the building materials which are liable to catch fire and which are piled up all around any old way. And then you often have to wait for a cart or a buffalo waggon to get off the track while the drunken driver wakes out of his sleep. And then you have to stand for an hour waiting to get to the watering station or the coal bunkers because six or seven other brigades are already waiting before you.... Then the repair workshops aren't up to much either. There's still a lack of skilled machine fitters. A damaged works locomotive is often left to freeze in the depot for weeks. And all the time we need every bit of transport we have as badly as we need bread!"

By the end of the day we had covered more than

a hundred kilometres back and forth over the checkered territory of the works and building sites; we had made the maddest detours and zigzags, cleared away the most extraordinary obstacles from the track, loaded and unloaded the most varied sorts of freight. We had been to the pump station on the bank of the Tom, had more than once driven through the iron works, and once into the giant thundering hall of the rolling mill, which looks like some tremendous railway station—it is so big that the steel cross-beams of the roof seem to hover in a blue haze up above. While moving ourselves, we had seen a whole world in motion. Dazzling rivulets of molten iron bubbling up out of giant crucibles into moulds of earth and sand. White-hot lengths of steel leaping forward as quick as lightning on the rollers. The monster of the blooming mill, with its giant chewing jaws, swallowed a five-ton block of white-hot blazing steel and pounded it this way and that on the gleaming rollers. The reflected glow flickered red and green on the forms of the workers, the leaping fires cast their titanic shadows on the walls. The voices of the workers could not be heard, but out of the deafening pandemonium of the works the strength of their own will power and of their discipline seemed to proclaim itself. Embodied in these figures was the thrilling struggle for skill, the drama of the socialist fight for mastery.

For a moment I thought that high up on a platform of the blooming mill, where the engineers stood directing operations, I had recognized Winkler among the others. He was wearing blue overalls and his dark-tinted safety glasses were pushed high up on his forehead.

Where had his colleague Mr. Gourtoff landed up? Every day I looked out for John Odak; I asked for Ivan Odak, the man in leather, the tall dark-skinned American, the assembler. All in vain. In the blazing cauldron of this vast enterprise you could lose touch with another as easily as in the dark abyss of some great city!

Petro Yermolaichenko fulfilled his counter-assignment. Very neatly he wrote down the figures on the sheet of paper which hung on his board, and then he took on an extra job—taking two carloads of cross-beams, tin plate and knee-iron to the building site for the extension of the workshop for wood treatment and bringing back some large wooden casting moulds to the foundry and some planed beams and piles to the upper building site on the return journey. The bluish glint of the moonlight had long been playing on Petro's black leather jacket when we turned back towards the depot.

In the depot, on a brightly lighted wall, white letters on a red ground shouted forth the slogan in which the dictatorship of the proletariat was now quite unequivocally connected with discipline in the transport system.

Sasha and I were ready to drop with fatigue. But Petro and the fireman walked around their machine with hammer and lamp and tested all the vital parts before brigadier Yermolaichenko in the presence of the engineer on duty handed over No. 32-12 to the next brigade.

First Leaf from a Diary

August 7

Our brigade of six is beginning to get acquainted pretty closely with the great combinat of Kuznetskstroy.

We have specialized. Abchuk has been assigned to the power station, Safar to the chemical works, I to the transport sector, and so on. Besides this Abchuk and I have moved over to the apartment of the fitter Rodion next door—first street, second house. Rodion is from Chelyabinsk and he makes some twenty comparisons a day between conditions there and those at Magnitostroy. The comparisons are invariably to the advantage of the Urals plant, but we are convinced that if he were living there, it would be the other way about. He is dissatisfied with himself and with the plant. He demands from both still more tempo and still more organization. He has a perfect right to do so; he draws practical conclusions from his dissatisfaction—is a shock brigader. Rodion's field of activity is the power station. But he fancies that the genuine age of Kuznetskstroy is already a thing of the past. The great times were those of the construction job. Now, when the plant is operating, it doesn't seem so interesting; the daily routine has set in. The revolutionary *élan*, the heroic self-sacrifice of the first building period are over. He thinks that the struggle with the class enemy and with the powers of nature has become easier, smaller. The great wreckers, he believes, are now extinct, like those stuffed monsters of prehistoric times which you can see in museums, and their place has been taken by the

petty grabbers, loafers, bureaucrats and other small rodents. So he has tried to get transferred from the power station to a more difficult building sector, but the administration says no—they want to keep him right here in the power station, where the great turbo-generator is being repaired.

Abchuk contests Rodion's views and contradicts him continually. He tells about the foundry foreman S., who today by his personal heroism has saved a foundry furnace which was prematurely started, not by inexperienced, but by malignant hands (such cases occur daily), about the night work of the Komsomols at the blast furnaces, and much else besides.

... Visited the power station with Rodion by night. Rodion worked eleven hours yesterday and spent another two hours at a meeting. While at work, he avoids looking at the great illuminated electric clock. It is his enemy; its finger-hand robs him of precious time. "It's the only mechanism which runs all life long without stopping," says he. He tells me that the electrician Zinitsyn from Nadezhdinsk has at last been transferred to the power station, and that this was done thanks to the efforts of an unknown bookkeeper who took the matter up with Borodin himself.

Six-storied steam boilers of a new design, installed by a German firm, with vertical tubes which remind one of huge organ pipes. Special mills are grinding the coal mixture. The pulverized coal, when strewn on the furnace fires, produces an extraordinarily powerful heating effect.

Few men at work. A smell like ozone. Wonderful view from the elevated switchboard over the soft humming generators!

"A regular bit of socialism," said the man on duty, waving his arms towards the transformers. "Mastered strength and smooth efficiency. That's what our whole life must be like five to ten years from now."

Safar came back from the coking works at dawn. We drove to the *Sotsgorod* in the same motor-bus. He describes the shock brigades of the coking works: "I want to write a poem about it. And you must promise me to translate it into German, so that the workers in Europe can read it too. Do you know what I'm going to call it? Fire-Proof Men!" (But he hasn't yet written a single line of it.)

In the afternoon we visit Rudolf Khitarov, secretary of the Stalinsk Party Committee. He speaks German well, has worked as a leader in the Young Communist International. A typical Komsomol head, if there is such a thing. (In the gallery of the Young Communist leaders I have sometimes been surprised to note a trait of similarity, a common physiognomy, hard to define. Or is it their way of moving and speaking?) He tells of the struggle of the local Party organization for the fulfilment of the plan. The main aim at present is to "acclimatize" the great mass of peasant labour power, just come from the countryside, to the conditions of industry, to rally them round the banner of the shock brigades, to awaken their intelligence, to rouse a spirit of socialist ambition and competition in these people. In this way, by means of education, the fluctuation of labour-power—this scourge of our great construction jobs—is being effectually combated, and socialist labour discipline, without which we cannot raise the productivity of labour or lower production costs, is being instilled into the new

workers. Hand in hand with this goes the difficult and highly responsible task of systematically improving the living conditions of our workers, of effecting a swift and decisive improvement in supplies of food and goods, but above all in housing. Here, as everywhere, the success of the production and building plan is guaranteed by the confident carrying into effect of the Six Conditions of Comrade Stalin.

If you consider the whole mass of workers on the territory of the Kuznetsk Works—including seasonal workers, peasants recruited from collective farms, young assistants and women—the stratum of Party members seems amazingly thin; and the percentage of older skilled cadres of workers is extremely small too. And the average "Party age" of Communists in most of the workshops is hardly more than one or two years, while on the construction sections it is still less. But who are these Communists? Whence comes their truly boundless authority among the masses? Comrade Khitarov answers us: "They are the new breed of men who have stood the test. Those who have definitely acquired the new, socialist attitude towards their work. The way to the Party is the way of the shock brigades. We have no Communists here who are not shock brigaders. Shock work is the first school of the Party candidate. Here he gets his training, shows what he can do. The non-Party workers have the example of these best ones before their eyes every day. They really are the vanguard. They sweep the others along with them, lead them forward! Try to conceive what Kuznetskstroy will mean for Siberia: A huge industrial and cultural centre of the future. A technical and political school for the

peasantry. Kuznetskstroy will supply Siberia not only with metal but with metallurgists too. It will produce skilled cadres. It will be a rallying point, a source of the class forces which are leading the way in hard struggle to the socialist, the classless age."

TO

Second Leaf From the Diary

August 13

A meeting was to be held in the Stalinsk City Soviet on questions of social and general living conditions.

The vice-chairman of the Magnitogorsk supply department, Comrade Korshun, had come over to give a report on the successes and shortcomings of his municipal system and to exchange experiences. He did not content himself with the printed statistics and typed reports of his Stalinsk colleagues. No, he had himself worn out the soles of his smoothly polished riding boots walking for two or three days around the uneven streets of the *Sotsgorod*, had visited the health department of the militia, the hospital, the quarantine barracks and a dozen houses and kitchens; he had inspected baths and food storage places. He poked his nose into everything; in these two or three days he had become quite a popular phenomenon in the town. Everyone recognized him, everyone marvelled at his tremendous nose with the green sun glasses perched upon it and the fatherly Ukrainian moustache which hung down in two long grey bushy tufts over both corners of his mouth.

He was interested in all this intermingling—surprising to every stranger—of dens, huts, barracks, standard houses, house blocks and brick buildings

which, neatly aligned side by side, merged into a remarkable combination—a picture with which Korshun was well acquainted from his experience of the new construction jobs in the Urals. He was interested in all this network of marshes, sheds, and rubbish-heaps between the *Sotsgorod* and the barrack town, where new building sites were already being pegged out, but where aimless foot-paths still wound their way among piles of rubbish, evil-smelling manure heaps and puddles of emptied dish-water. He was interested in the cowsheds and the pigs-sties on the edge of the new city, where the housewives approached twice daily with milk-tubs and troughs of fodder. He frowned with disapproval as he opened the plank doors of some of the hastily erected latrines which (before the completion of the sewer system) stood around in hundreds; not all of them are kept sufficiently clean or disinfected with lime. He shook his head when he saw the lines of people waiting with buckets, kettles and pots for their turn at the water taps and before the hot water station of the communal boilers. He pulled out his folding cup and took a couple of drinks to test the drinking water; it was as cold as you could wish and did not taste at all bad—only somewhat hard, owing to its mineral content.

He was interested in everything—in the countless throngs of swarming children on the streets, slag heaps and squares and even on the roofs. In the barrack town he had noticed a kindergarten, a summer playground with a sand hill and water pool, and he asked himself why the *Sotsgorod* did not have something like that too.

I shall never forget how we and Korshun paid a

visit to the home of one of the best leaders of the navvies' brigades, a Kirghizian named Ali-Mukhanov, who had received many awards and had finally been rewarded for his model work with a two-room apartment in the *Sotsgorod*. Only a couple of days ago he was living on the edge of the steppe in a *kibitka** along with his numerous family, and now he had moved into the most up-to-date living quarters. The good man had not been able to prevent his dear relatives from pitching the *kibitka*, according to immemorial custom, right in the middle of the big two-windowed room; the circular tent consisted of a complicated skeleton of thin strips of wood with felt blankets and wattled reeds stretched over it. It took up the whole room except the four corners, which were piled high with hay, brushwood and groundsel. The kitchen had been turned into a rabbit hutch, and the six children and the wife's family had found no better use for the smaller room than to convert it into a toilet. Here, however, the house committee had raised objections to such utilization of living space and had above all strictly prohibited the family from making fires on the floor of the *kibitka*. So the family began to yearn for a return to light, air and the free steppe horizons, and brigadier Ali-Mukhanov had some trouble in persuading them that an immediate reversion to their old way of living was inadvisable in view of the approaching autumn rains and that some slight adaptation to the European forms of domestic life could only be of advantage to them. . . . During the six months that he has spent at Kuznetskstroy the shrewd and agile Kirghizian has grown up head and shoulders above his domestic environment. "You

* *Kibitka*: nomad tent.

see," he told us, "in my own house I am like a guest. It's only on the building site that I am really at home. The brigade is my family." His role in the process of work and his activity in social matters have placed him, both politically and culturally, on a level with the class-conscious Russian workers, and he finds it easier to educate the young Tatar and Kirghizian workers up to his own level than to reform his family's way of living. But, good worker that he is, he will succeed in doing that too.

We spent half a day with Korshun in the large lower settlement of clay huts which takes up almost the whole of the low ground between the *Sotsgorod* and the half-dried river Aba. Even in the "Upper-Colony," close to the cottages which carry a flavour of cleanliness, soap and linoleum, there is a straggling settlement of clay huts. It represents a bitter necessity in this city of hectic growth, where hundreds of families coming from the countryside have to be accommodated every day. Many of them flatly refuse to move into the barrack town, which covers a large area on the left bank of the stream beside the "Lower Colony." If they can build themselves a little *zemlyanka*,* half buried in the ground, of planks and clay and mud bricks, with their beside the "Lower Colony." If they can build themselves more at home, as though they were back in the village. The roofs are overgrown with grass and nettles, the small windows are mostly provided with real panes of glass, reinforced by oil-soaked pages of newspaper against wind and rain. Rusty chimney pipes belch clouds of smoke over the tumbledown chaos of plank walls, earth roofs, haystacks, barrels, fences and flapping washing. The

* *Zemlyanka*: mud hut.

puddles of the Aba are used to wash linen, pots and pans, and even for bathing. We were not a little surprised to find that the interior of most of these huts bore evidence of that innate peasant cleanliness which is transplanted here by many different peoples from the cooler and better watered regions of middle and northern Siberia. Nothing escaped the eye of the visitor from Magnitogorsk. He noted the equipment of the night watchmen in the *Sotsgorod* (leather jacket, rifle and alarm whistle); caught one of them asleep, and observed that another emitted a suspicious smell of brandy. He noted how in the evening the electric light would often suddenly go out for hours at a stretch in the housing sections. (The towns of the Urals, too, were still experiencing a severe shortage of electric current.) Once he removed his spectacles from his nose (he was really far-sighted) when he found a dog's body lying in the ditch by the highway in the first stages of decomposition. Another time, at a cistern of drinking water which had no tap, the people would lift off the lid and lower their cups into the water. Both times he said: "Mad, mad.... And then we wonder why it is that epidemics break out!"

He scribbled his thick notebook full of notes and came to the meeting fully primed with information.

But before that we paid a visit to the barracks. It happened like this. Quite by accident, through a wrong connection on the telephone, Korshun found that Anna Ivanna Svirskaya, a woman metal worker in the tool shop, member of the city Soviet (sector for social welfare), was launching a cultural campaign that day, "with book and broom," together with the Komsomols from the model barrack No. 142, in some of the worst barracks of the "Lower

Colony," notorious for their untidiness and dirt. We at once decided to join in. The meeting would not begin till late in the evening, so we could still get there on time. "There's a woman for you!" said Korshun full of admiration, as he stroked his moustache horizontally. "Turner of the sixth category—that's something like!"

We met the brigade at the level crossing. A great long freight train separated us. It kept shunting this way and that. When it finally got past and the crossbeam swung up, we joined the brigade and made the acquaintance of Anna Ivanna. She was a little woman with black pig-tails fastened behind her head and a red kerchief over them. Almost swallowed up in the lusty throng of the nine Kom-somols, her energy and vigorous movements made her presence felt all the same.

We made our way into the barrack town. The flaming sunset was blazing on the window-panes, the red glow glinted on the slanting roofs. Work was over, and the straight "streets" were full of movement. The oppressive heat of the day was abating. Here and there a family sat eating their supper out of doors. Somewhere behind the houses, an accordion was playing and girls' voices were singing in chorus. Old folks squatted on the doorsteps. Two chess-players were sitting astride a thick beam. By the draw-well stood a chair with a worker sitting on it, while another shaved him; a third, who had his day-off tomorrow, was polishing his sheepskin boots. A goat was circling around the peg to which it was tied, cats who were about to kitten were looking for a place in the last rays of sunshine.

We entered the barracks of the "national minori-

ties." Here lived Tatars, there Bashkirians and Chuvashians. All the rooms were kept clean, looked cheerful. We saw schoolrooms, Red Corners, and everywhere newspapers and books in the modern Latinized alphabet. There was also a "national minority" kindergarten with small white lacquered furniture, toy boxes and blackboards for drawing.

"The U.K.K. is all one huge kindergarten of young nations," Korshun observed.

We took a look at one of the "bad" barracks. Here lived the Siberian seasonal workers who had never seen a city or a construction job in their lives before. They are nicknamed "*chaldonies*" by the other workers. The dormitory was snoring like a great sawmill. The air was thick and evil-smelling. There was a bitter taint of makhorka tobacco smoke.

"Who is *starosta* of the barrack here?" asked Anna Svirskaya. Many of them got up, the brigade was met with mistrustful looks. One or two approached. They wore bast shoes, their padded jackets hung loose over their shoulders as is usual with building workers. The *starosta*, or monitor, of the barrack was fetched; he was a one-eyed invalid.

"When did you last give this place a washing? Why, the floor reeks of dirt. Why are all the windows shut?"

The *starosta* stammered something and the others laughed. The man with his one eye, they said, had to look after four whole barracks, and what barracks! He couldn't afford to be too particular.

"Why four? Don't you know the decision of your City Soviet: Every barrack must elect a *starosta* who is responsible for cleanliness and order?"

A *starosta* was elected at once; it was no accident that one of the youngest inmates of the barrack was chosen. The Komsomols handed him a small library of pamphlets on sanitary and political themes which they had brought with them, flung open a couple of windows, fetched brooms from the hall and began sweeping and scrubbing with a will. Anna Svirskaya, member of the City Soviet, put on an apron, brought in wet sand and began sweeping in the darkest corners with duster and broom. That made an impression. In a flash the whole barrack was on its feet; tables, benches, mats and trunks began to move, heaps of rubbish piled up before the doors, young and old lent a hand, even Korshun rubbed and scrubbed with fury at the walls together with us, and after twenty minutes' hard sanitary work the barrack was transformed.

"That's how we are transforming the inhabitants too," said Korshun that evening at the meeting "Cleanliness in people's homes, cleanliness in people's heads! And the other way about too. If we liquidate illiteracy, we liquidate dirt as well. In a little clay hut I saw a corner full of ikons. I counted them—there were thirty-nine, large and small, saints and miracle workers. I took down some of the images from the wall and turned them over. Each one had a swarming nest of bugs on its back side. Isn't that symbolic? The reverse side of superstition—vermin!"

Korshun's speech before the Stalinsk City Soviet was not a litany of small facts, nor was it the sermon of one who knows better. He simply showed how the builders of Magnitogorsk have to overcome, step by step, the same, seemingly superhuman difficulties—and how they are doing it. These are the

critical moments inevitable in a process of gigantic growth; they are the hope-fraught problems of advance, of building and of mastering, at a time when life for the first time is contriving to leap over its own shadow. The labour of millions ceases to be a burden. It becomes the struggle for freedom, a matter of honour. This is the cultural revolution. It is leading us to the full morning of the socialist day, which will be festive as befits its nature. And Magnitogorsk, Korshun opines, is somewhat ahead of Stalinsk in this matter....

And Korshun fulfilled my request too. He saw to it that the German Siberians—collective farmers, some hundred and thirty in number, who had been living scattered apart in the barrack town, were collected together in a new barrack. That would give them the opportunity to carry on organized cultural work, to form a German Red Corner, a library and a political class, and also to have systematic communication and cultural intercourse with several Communists, emigrants from Germany, who were working in the iron works.

II

Third Leaf from the Diary
(A Story)

August 14

The twenty year old bricklayer Opalko was standing on the scaffolding of the Socialist City. Now he would stand upright, now squat down, rocking to and fro from the knees and hips. In his right hand he held a bricklayer's trowel, and in his left lay a board with mortar (like a painter's palette). The wall grew with surprising swiftness under his hands and the mere sight of its growth compelled

his neighbours to emulate him, to keep pace with him, or at any rate to keep more or less on the same level as he. He applied lead and water-level, scooped up thick clods of running mortar and stroked them smooth with the trowel. Then he laid brick after brick on the layer of mortar, knocking each brick into place with exact blows of a wooden hammer. The bricks were handed to him by the assistant who served him and his neighbour. As he took the outstretched bricks, Opalko would turn back and forth as quick as lightning, as though he were practising a wrestler's hold. His movements were exact, attuned precisely to those of his assistant. His breathing could be clearly heard. With measured disciplined movements, he fitted himself into the strict rhythm of the labour process. Trowel, hammer, spade and axe lay ready beside him, all in due order.

At six o'clock Opalko stopped work. He hung the trowel on the mortar bucket. Then he threw the axe on to a beam and the shovel on to a sand heap so that both of them—axe and shovel alike—as though arrested in mid-flight, remained standing upright. Then he slapped and rubbed the crust of lime from his hands, just like a baker's apprentice cleans his hands of dough, and slid down the rungs of the ladder. He had to wait till his turn came for washing. The lead pipe ran along the ground, rose up head high and culminated in an iron tap out of which the streams of water shot down upon Opalko's arms, shoulders and neck. His smooth crop of light curly hair reminded one of the thatched roofs of Ukrainian clay cottages, his round eyes peeping out like little windows underneath. He dried himself with his work smock and put on his green belted blouse, the "young shock-brigader"

dress of the Komsomol, and started off for the building workers' meeting.

Above the forest of scaffolding and cranes, screeched swarms of crows, swinging to and fro as though held on invisible strings. Clouds hurried southward across the sky like silent pilgrims—snow-white and grey underneath. "Autumn will be here soon," said Opalko as he trudged through the warm dust of the building yard together with several hundred of his comrades. They left behind them the building area of the Socialist City, crossed the Aba and passed by the playgrounds, where vigorous games of volley ball were already in progress. Further to the left stood the huge barrack town of the "Lower Colony."

Opalko, who had set up a record in bricklaying (7,200 bricks a shift), was a pupil of brigadier Samarin, who had graduated from the Moscow Central Institute of Labour (C.I.T.) and thence transplanted scientific methods of work to the building site. Opalko did not know who his parents were; only five years ago he had been a waif, had been moreover a terrible hooligan, one of the most reckless among the army of "*bezprizorni*," who lived in cellars, spent the night in asphalt boilers, ran away from all schools and homes and rode for thousands of kilometres as stowaways on the buffers of trains. Until the rebirth of the country in the storm of industrialization caught up him and millions of others with him and gave them a new life, a life of work.

The sun-scorched steppe was now loud with the chirping of countless crickets. Beyond it stretched the pasture land for a breadth of two or three kilometres up to the bushy copses which line the left

bank of the Tom. A couple of hundred horses were grazing there. Riding horses, draught horses. Heavy powerful cart horses with great swelling muscles and hairy hocks. Little Siberian cart horses. Besides some good half-blood stallions and a troop of pretty fillies.

Five thousand building workers were sitting and lying about on the grass, singing the chorus to long-drawn-out song verses. Several groups collected round some young people who were dancing and clapped their hands in time to the rhythm of the accordion.

At last a small Ford car came buzzing up. The workers greeted two representatives of the works and building administration, and the meeting began.

The platform of a five-ton truck formed the speaker's rostrum. Second to speak was Opalko. He sprang on to the platform at one bound and started off, hands thrust in his trousers pockets: "Boys, you all know me, and know I never was no speaker. Well then, we've got hold of the record so to speak. How come we got hold of the record? Seems to me the reason we did it is because, so to speak, we've managed to master technique. Our great leader Comrade Stalin has said: In the period of reconstruction, said he, it's technique that decides everything. Well, that's what I wanted to say. But technique, seems to me, isn't just something made out of iron and metal—blast furnaces and open-hearth furnaces and automobiles. We got to be technical ourselves, we got to tame the machines. A machine's like a young horse—if you don't know him. You can bawl and storm and flog him as much as you please, he won't do as you tell him, no he won't! See what I mean? Then comes his mas-

ter and he just says gee-up and takes the reins in his hands and the horse trots along as quiet as can be, it's a pleasure to see him. So we got to take the reins in our hands..."

He stuck out his arse and executed a couple of comical riding movements which the audience greeted with hoots of laughter.

"No, boys, I'm serious. Remember how we stood forty men in a chain and handed the bricks from hand to hand all the way up. Then we got some American transporters, three of them, and that meant two men could do the work of forty. But then they went and ruined the rollers, so forty men had to stand in a chain once more till we learnt to mend the rollers ourselves. Well, you all come from collective farms, don't you? It's just the same story with tractors, I know. And now how about brick-laying. How can technique be put at the proper level unless the bricklayers are placed correctly according to the methods of the C.I.T., unless all the materials and apparatus are got ready?..."

He does not get to the end of the sentence. There is a sudden outcry, shots and shouts echo from the river bank. A couple of riders there are galloping away at top speed.

The audience jumps up and runs this way and that; many of them race over to the meadows, jump on unsaddled horses. In vain does the old brick-layer, who is acting as chairman, imploringly raise his hands: "Stop, boys, stop! What the hell has come over you?"

"Horse thieves! Horse thieves!"

They run, shout, ride. It is hard to say who is the pursuer and who the pursued. Continuing the meeting is out of the question.

Before a quarter of an hour has passed they drag back three young fellows, knocked about, bleeding, strapped on the galloping horses. The thieves have not succeeded in reaching the thickets on the river bank with the stolen mares. They are foaming at the mouth, bellowing desperately, writhing like madmen.

"String them up! Kill them!"

Twenty or thirty men hurl themselves on the prisoners. The law of the steppe demands their death. For thousands of years horse thieves have been killed. There is no mercy for horse thieves. And it seems as if the inexorable law of the steppe is to be put into effect.



But Opalko's boyish piercing voice cuts through the pandemonium. Once more he is up on the platform and he shouts: "Stop, boys! for goodness sake! What are you doing?"

And he, the former rowdy and hooligan, now the Komsomol Opalko, makes the frenzied men halt.

"Are you a pack of wolves in the steppe or organized collective farmers at a construction job? Haven't we a Soviet government and Soviet laws?"

A couple of saner workers thrust their way between. The law of the Soviet power triumphs over the law of the steppe. The prisoners are taken to the Stalinsk militia in the automobile of the works administration.

The meeting continues.

12

Fourth Leaf From the Diary

August 19

Saw Odak again, John Odak. He hunted me up in my room and woke me at six o'clock this morning. Took me straight off to the blast furnaces. He can already gabble some amazing bits of Russian, only his pronunciation is a bit hard ("e" instead of "ye"). Is working on the transfer bridges over which the ore and coke are lifted in great elevators to the tunnel-hole. The tunnel-hole is the mouth of the blast furnace, which is here surmounted by highly perfected mechanized appliances for filling. Odak also showed me the bunkers and the concrete mixing pans from which transporters carry the coke and ore to the elevator in an even stream.

"Everything tip-top, quite according to the last word in technique," said he. "Only unfortunately they're not making proper use of everything as yet. Right on the very first day I wrote out a long

rationalization proposal. I worked at it the whole night till my head was ready to split, and handed it in next morning to the rationalization bureau. But the rationalization bureau, since my proposal had to do with the perfecting of the elevator mechanism, sent me with my design to the mechanization department. The mechanization department was of the opinion that transporters and transfer bridges surely are means of transport, and they sent me to the department for factory transport. The transport department found this presumption simply absurd, and sent me back again to the rationalizers, who finally decided to take my proposal and examine it. I saw the official or secretary write the number 4731 and the date on my thick envelope and stuff it in the third drawer on the right hand of his writing desk. From this drawer my proposal was unearthed, not without difficulty, when I came back yesterday after an interval of nearly two weeks. It hadn't even been registered in the filing room. It might have lain there for months and years. I took it straight off to the Communist fraction of the factory committee and they got things going in ten minutes. Winkler, with whom I've got a date for today at noon, said to me: "There surely are some dyed-in-the-wool bureaucrats whose only activity is to cover acres of paper with monthly reports about their activity...."

Lunched with Odak in the dining hall for foreigners. Sure enough, Winkler was there. He seems to have started a new life, looks very happy. His eyes are now laughing all the time. The main theme of his enthusiasm is: This city with a quarter of a million inhabitants and all of them with work to do! This city where everyone has work, where every-

one has his value, where everyone is necessary and shares the responsibility, everyone finds his right place and feels his own worth! This city where life has a meaning again! Yes, it was he who was standing on the platform of the rolling mill—I was not mistaken. He himself is rolling out mighty plans for reorganization. Lives in the "Upper Colony," opposite the Gourtoffs. We arranged to meet at the Gourtoffs after five o'clock. I took down the address and went along that evening.

Mrs. Grace Gourtoff was not sulking in a corner (as I had expected) over her English newspapers. Odak and Winkler were there already. Engineer Gourtoff was just giving an interview. On his writing table lay that same white tropical helmet which we had encountered on the main street of Stalinsk. It was no longer completely white. Its owner sat—one leg thrown over the other, the bulging cartridge case on his knees—before Gourtoff's table. Now and then through his thick horn-rimmed glasses he allowed his gaze to linger all too long on Mrs. Grace, who interjected short remarks in a pert tone, as she leaned out of the wide open window, watching the iron works lighting up. The guest was introduced to us as the special correspondent of a Moscow evening paper: Comrade Burtsev.

Comrade Burtsev had been asking questions about the ideals of the American intelligentsia and jotting down Gourtoff's answers in a notebook which he now stuffed into the cartridge case. Some wax paper and a slice of bread with red caviar could be seen peeping out of the case. We drank tea, but the water tasted of smoke. Grace did not drink, she smoked. Since the last "For Ladies" cigarette,

brought with her packed in tinfoil, had gone up in smoke, she preferred the cheap Soviet brand "Kuzbas," calling it her first approach to the taste and ideas of this remarkable and after all really very agreeable country....

Grace: "Astonished, aren't you? Yes, yes, Mister Winkler has—how do they call it here?—taken us in tow and he is towing us into this nice crazy life."

Gourtoff: "And she means it! What do you say now? The first few days it was all 'pack up the trunks at once and let's go home again.' Then she wanted to go to Irkutsk as the next best thing—they say it's a bit nearer to America. And now, all of a sudden, she gets to like it here. She wants to be emancipated or go to work in an office, and she'll apply for membership in the Party if she doesn't have a baby soon."

Engineer Gourtoff seems to have taken a back seat.

Burtsev: "Mr. Gourtoff, would you like to write me a short article by the day after tomorrow on unemployment in the United States—about a hundred and fifty lines or so?"

Gourtoff: "Very sorry, but I don't know very much about that. Over there I had work right up to the time I left. But wouldn't you like to ask our friend Mr. Odak, who seems to have had all sorts of experiences?"

Grace: "Say, I'll write the article!"

Gourtoff: "But listen, Grace—!"

Grace: "Is it okay? Would you like to talk it over at once? Of course, you mustn't expect too much of me, you know...."

Burtsev: "Why, of course, I'd be delighted!"

Burtsev had eyes only for Grace now. They sat down together and started talking it over.

Winkler (laughing): "I disclaim all responsibility for the product!"

Burtsev: "Come on, let's go!"

Later on we all went together to the I.T.R.* Club. This time there was neither a movie nor a concert in the clubroom, but something much more interesting: a public trial of two workers in the designing office who had absented themselves from work. The Comrades' Court of three members, elected for this purpose by the workers of the plant, had the legal powers of an ordinary People's Court. It consisted of a woman worker from the iron works, the chief of the designing office and a representative of the trade union. The accused were two friends, neither of them more than twenty-six years old. Both had studied at the Tomsk Technical College and were now working as blueprint designers in the works administration. On the first day of the hot month of August, after pay day, they had secretly decided to say goodbye for a time to the noisy building with its thousand ink pots, blotters, paper baskets and draftsmen's tables, and to paddle a folding boat of their own construction four hundred kilometres down the Tom in order to pay a little visit to their native city, Tomsk. So they put aside compasses and rulers, took shot-guns and paddles and sailed away. But they did not get far. Before they had reached Saltymakova, the first camping place, their boat capsized a little below the confluence of the lower Terr; they got a good wetting, tramped through the woods in a pretty hungry condition towards the west until they struck the railway line. They thus missed ten days' work in all and now, cured of unproductive romanticism, were appearing

* Engineers and Technicians.

before the Comrades' Court, where they themselves confessed and condemned their grave breach of discipline and expressed their sincere repentance. After two hours' proceedings the court decided not to take more severe measures but gave both the excursionists a severe reprimand coupled with a warning of dismissal, their names to be posted on the black board, and moved that they be expelled from the trade union with the privilege of being reinstated after a two years' probation period.

Burtsev had taken his leave. It was just midnight as we left the club. The din and glare of the iron works smote the reddened sky. The hill to the north, which we—following one of Safar's inspirations—called "the Hill of the Patriarchs," lay black in the gloom like a sleeping beast.

To the left, on the saddle between two mountains, fires and torches were burning. There stood a little grove beneath whose leafy roof meetings and fetes were held. It was the beginning of a future Park of Culture and Rest. Grace insisted that some nocturnal festival was being celebrated there. She wanted us to go there at all costs. Almost forcibly, she dragged Gourtoff along with her.

Odak and Winkler strode ahead arm in arm. They were singing something American. But soon they started up the tune of one of the Komsomol songs which they heard every day on the building sites.

It was a marching song, and it *made* you fall into step with the others.

Fifth and Last Leaf from the Diary

August 21

Excursion to old Kuznetsk by Abchuk and me. Windless heat. The chirping of crickets. The bus jolts across the dusty steppe. The steppe road is nothing but a string of intertwining wheel-tracks, scoured grass, a worn strip in the brown-grey carpet of this scorched heath.

Then along the river bank, a little upstream as far as the landing place of the ferry. The great log floating season has begun again. Thousands of peeled tree trunks are bobbing downstream like huge schools of fish, nuzzling each others' flanks or overtaking one another in scattered groups. The river is covered with timber far and wide. It brings with it on its surface a cool smell from the mountains.

We look for a bathing place a little higher up, swim about for half an hour between the smooth tree-trunks. A crowd of young workers from Stalinsk is there already—good runners, jumpers and swimmers, all more or less naked.

In mid-stream the floating logs, like a school of dolphins, snuggle close around the ferry boat which takes us across.

On the other side, a huge leafy forest envelops us in its shadow. For a long time we can hear the song of the floating logs coming up to us from the river. Then the hill of Old Kuznetsk with its many gardens rises before us like the arched back of a cat. The crooked little town seems like a joke to one coming from Stalinsk—like a graceful anachronism, like the illustration to a tale of Gogol's. The

streets seem bent with age. The darkened little houses hide themselves away in the foliage of oaks and beeches; none of the roofs rise above the tree-tops. The ancient window-panes twinkle like dim-sighted eyes under half-closed shutters. Only two buildings have more than one story—the school and the co-operative store. In the deep shade of a veranda people are sitting silent like ghosts around a samovar. Perhaps they are waiting and listening for the horn and hoofs of the post chaise. Their clock has stopped a hundred years ago. On the exaggeratedly large market place, which makes the houses look still smaller, we read such inscriptions as “Co-operative” and “Executive Committee”; yet over everything there hangs, as it were, a spider’s web in which the dust of centuries has gathered. Countless clothes lines flap their many-coloured washing throughout the town. From time to time you can hear the hoarse coughing copper beat of the senile church bells. The town Soviet still keeps a decrepit night watchman in its pay, equipped with lantern and wooden rattle. Look, there goes an old-fashioned basket-carriage, jolting by on its springs—a real *tarantass*. On a stagnant horse-pond a couple of ducks are preening themselves, pigs and chickens seek the scanty shade of a birch grove. And high up yonder above the chimney smoke and the tree-tops, on a bare precipice, glowers the stone ruin of the citadel, from whose battlements a horde of robber Cossacks of the tsar’s empire used to hold sway over the tributary peoples of the Altai. The little town, which has remained lazy and sleepy ever since those times, used once to trade in furs, grains of gold and Circassian tobacco.

On a winter evening of the year 1857 a thirty-six

year old ensign descended from the post sleigh here. He wore the *dokha*, the long Siberian fur coat made of the winter skin of the mountain goat, with a shapeless *tulup* of shaggy sheep skin over it, making him look like a nomad tent. The new arrival attracted attention by his dark deep-set eyes with their fitful fire, and his beard, though broad and soft, looked scanty and threadbare as though glued on. His papers were in order. They showed that he was a political prisoner condemned to death nine years ago, then pardoned and exiled to Siberia; after four years of hard labour he had again been pardoned—sent from the prison to the barrack. He had come now from Semipalatinsk, where he had risen from the rank of private to that of non-commissioned officer in the Seventh Siberian Battalion of the line. He had come here in order to marry Maria Dmitrievna, the widow of the late government clerk Issayev. He had met the Issayev's in Semipalatinsk, in the house of Belikhov, the battalion commander, and been stricken with a secret, passionate, tragic love for his friend's wife. Issayev had been an invalid for many years and was finally transferred to the quiet of Kuznetsk, where he died soon after his arrival. When the ensign received the news of Issayev's death through Belikhov, a fever such as he had never experienced before seized hold of him. He asked for leave. The fires of his old passion drove him to make the icy winter journey to Kuznetsk. Here he married Maria according to church ritual. And he lived with her in Kuznetsk for more than a year before taking her with him to Semipalatinsk, whence in the summer of 1859, being pensioned off on account of sickness, he journeyed home with Maria after ten years' exile. He had been

"cured" forever of the revolutionary enthusiasm with which he had once been infected by the circle of Petrashevsky. This ensign was called Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, and here—this typical Russian provincial street where he lived, this wooden row of fences, one-storied houses and peasant cottages which leads down to the river bank is called Dostoyevsky Street. And here—in this pitiful idyllic home, where flower pots nestle in carved window frames, he fashioned the horrors of his years of hard exile at Omsk into *Memoirs from a Dead House*.

The little town does not need any museum. It is one itself. But it has a museum nevertheless; its founder was a smith named Yaroslavtsev, and its present manager, a teacher by profession, shows us historical exhibits—snowshoes and tools of the Shorians mountaineers, weapons of the Tatar Kalmuks—and he tells us the history of the mountain fortress, which after 1780 was turned into a prison. We see the portrait of the peasant Rogov, who returned home from the western front in 1918 and organized a corps of a thousand guerilla fighters in Kuznetsk against Kolchak. He burned all the churches in Kuznetsk, together with the priests, harassed the rich fur and timber merchants, and had General Putilov shot—that same general who after his immortal defeats in the Russo-Japanese war had come here to dissipate his pension in quiet seclusion from the world. Rogov did not follow the glorious path of the other guerilla leaders. He soon became a bandit chief, a terror to the countryside, turned against the Red Army, was wounded in the foot during an engagement and killed by his former followers.

The town of Kuznetsk possesses yet another rare exhibit. A living exhibit. The director of the museum gives us its address. It is the grey-haired Nikolai Alexeyevich Popov, one of the last generation, now long extinct, of the peasant Populists, the intellectual Narodniki, who, beginning with the sixties of last century, "went to the people" in order to pave the way for the Russian peasant revolution as teachers, exponents, and propagandists of an utopian socialism. After the collapse of this movement Nikolai Alexeyevich joined the new organization *Zemlya i Volya*, which strove to win "land and freedom" for the peasants by combining the most determined forces of the countryside into local anarchist groups of action according to Bakuninist methods. In practice however this led to an outburst of individual terrorism, which was finally followed in the summer of 1879 by the splitting off of a purely terrorist party, the "People's Will" or *Narodnaya Volya*, in opposition to which the adherents of the old conspirative methods who remained true to Bakuninist tactics formed a new organization, the *Cherny Peredyel*, or "Black Redistribution" group who correctly placed revolutionary mass struggle above individual terrorism, but, in contradistinction to the People's Will Party, gravely underestimated the value of a strongly centralized and strictly disciplined revolutionary organization. Nikolai Alexeyevich joined the "Black Redistribution" organization. He went once more to the people, this time not to preach ideals but to preach practical revolutionary action, and he chose as his sphere of activities the solitary little town on the Tom in far-off Siberia; however, we do not hear of any movement or of any action by which Popov shook the

sleeping town out of its slumbers. Rather did the old Narodnik, stagnating for decades in his backwater, gradually become something of a bourgeois himself, and today, more than half a century after "going to the people," the man is living as an ordinary lay-doctor, homeopath and dealer in medicinal herbs, and has long borne the stamp of mediocre respectability. The year 1917 and all that followed it have passed him by uncomprehended....

Here is the house, not far from the great writer's former home—Dostoyevsky Street, No. 46. We knock for a long time at the gate in the fence. A woman opens. She conducts us through the yard into the house. In the porch weeds are hung out to dry.

The little room is oblong and narrow. Dust covers the old furniture, books and bundles of medicinal herbs. The old man is sitting on a low stool at the table, bent over crucibles, tubes, bottles, and bowls; he is pounding dried roots in a little copper mortar. He must be well on into the seventies. Long white locks of hair and a white grandfather's beard frame his rosy face. His vivacious, watery blue eyes greet us from bushy eyebrows; he gives us his hand without rising.

He calmly and vigorously continues his work while Abchuk introduces us. The woman leaves us alone with him. He has already trotted out his remarkable reminiscences on various occasions for the benefit of passing journalists, dwelling especially on that last committee meeting of the *Zemlya i Volya* in St. Petersburg, which ended in the final breach between the two factions.

That was in the St. Petersburg of the era of Alexander II, on the evening of February 13, 1879, when a couple of committee members together with

friends from the St. Petersburg circle of the *Zemlya i Volya* held an illegal meeting on the Vassily Island. Before the congress, which was bound to result in a split, they wanted to make one last attempt to achieve unity, in order to maintain the fighting power of the revolutionary party intact. But the views were too sharply divergent and the personalities too different, "and in our movement it depended upon the personalities first and foremost." Types of men were assembled there—who could ever forget them! Hot blooded conspirators, cold-blooded men of action. Andrey Zhelyabov with his tangled beard paced tirelessly up and down before the window; he was tall and spacious in his movements and always as he turned on his heel he tossed his dark mane of hair. Nikolai Kibalchich, the young scientist, sat shivering at the table, his shoulders hunched, the collar of his coat turned up; his beard was of the same colour as his fur cap and blended with it into one shadowy mass. Between him and the two young women on the other side of the table stood the leaning candelabra with its dripping candles. When Kibalchich turned towards the two, his reddened over-strained eyes could hardly distinguish them from each other behind the dazzling light. They were both of the same age, about thirty-six, both dressed in black silk, the blouse buttoned up to the chin. Both had the same pale high forehead and the same aristocratic hands, but Vera Figner seemed more self-controlled, her eyes were more calm, whereas Sofia Perovskaya, while talking, let her head, shoulders and hands speak for her, and in moments of eagerness or rage would pull at her fingers till the joints cracked. In a corner sat a lean lively man with dark eyeglasses

and a mane of hair like an artist's. With his smooth protruding lower jaw he reminded one of a pike. Through his glasses you could see that one eye did not open as wide as the other.... He kept whispering the whole time with his neighbour, you could hear only the sibilant sounds of their talk, but these sounds had an uncommonly sharp disturbing effect. The man had a habit of laughing noiselessly—his pike's mouth would snap open, a couple of teeth were missing. "He was later unmasked as a *provocateur*; I have forgotten his name."

Popov, by the way, has an amazing memory. Perhaps also he draws upon his imagination to some extent when he confuses things which are actually separated in space and time. His narrative is full of detail and he begins: "Maybe you don't know what the month of February in St. Petersburg is like? The days are indescribably short, damp, grey—a monotonous pale twilight. Great flocks of crows or jackdaws make the sky still darker; often they fly silently like shadows. The people say: When they caw, it means a marriage, when they fly silently—a burial. On the island side, in the maze of streets and by-ways which resemble each other as closely as coffins, we had a secret printshop and a couple of safe meeting points. The "Red Tavern" was half underground, in a cellar—it smelt of fermenting wine. The sleighs were almost above our heads as they sped by with a jingle of bells. It was shrovetide, merry carnival time; late at night there was plenty of life on the streets—sleighs, noise, drunken people. That was good for us. Meetings by night did not cause remark. The police had their hands full with smaller fry. And the *Okhrana** people and

* Tsarist political police.

spies wanted to have their turn at dancing too....

"Zhelyabov leaned heavily on the table. He spoke long and solemnly: 'You are going the wrong way. The peasants are ignorant folk. Your agitation bears no fruit. You are talking your lips sore like fish who run their heads against the ice till they bleed. And ice remains ice—hard, cold.... Between us and the people stands the state. We must disorganize it. Then we will find our way to the people and the people their way to us. The country is asleep. Only shots, bombs can awaken it. Politics is terror. We must be politicians, then our education will bear fruit. The people will not listen to words any more—well then, it shall see deeds. We have executed a couple of enemies of the people. A few days ago another bloody tyrant, Prince Kropotkin, the governor of Kiev, fell by our hand. But many of our people fall as victims too. We will avenge them—blood for blood. We will deal out inexorable justice to the great ones of the state. And our verdicts will be enforced. No army and no legion of spies will help them against us. We are invisible, we are underground, and therefore terrible. The strong ones begin to feel that the earth is quaking under their feet....' He lowered his voice so that we involuntarily drew closer together: 'The time is now come,' he continued, almost like a sorcerer, 'to dislodge the most important wheel from the machine—Alexander! Thus the people will be freed at one blow and without great sacrifice from the hardest oppression.' 'And after Alexander II will come Alexander III,' observed one of us ironically. 'No matter,' retorted Zhelyabov swiftly and scornfully. 'The main thing is this—that the cause of the Party will strike root in all souls, and in

place of one tyrant's assassin thousands of determined judges will rise up from among the people! No autocrat will again escape the justice of the people!' 'The people? What people?' rejoined the other. 'The people is frozen with frost and burned with brandy as Nekrassov says. The people is not yet ready. Who then shall prepare it if we do not go to the people? The people will not come to us!' Many others argued in the same vein. 'He who gives up work in the countryside,' they said, 'is guilty of treason to the cause of the people.' And I too believed that we should give up politics and plunge down into the depths of the people's poverty, raise up the peasant from dull gloom and drive him to action; only by local peasant risings could all the forces of the social revolution be immediately released. 'No,' said Sofia Perovskaya, tense and quiet as if speaking to herself, but with a voice and a decision which cast a remarkable spell on all. 'The killing of the tsar means the realization of the revolution at the present time.' Most of the listeners nodded assent. The pike banged his fist on the table to signify his approval. We were left in the minority. We parted estranged. I was not in despair, but I had doubts also about the practicability of our program. I came here. In June or July of 1879 the secret congress was held in the Botanical Garden at Voronezh, which definitely spelled the split of the Party into two camps. Then, on March 1, 1881, after two unsuccessful attempts, the *Narodnaya Volya* executed the tsar. Grinevetsky threw a bomb at his feet. Zhelyabov, Kibalchich and Perovskaya were hanged. And after Alexander II came Alexander III."

However, the "going to the people" of a doubting

revolutionary amounted in reality to the flight of a recluse from the world.

His epoch vanished. And he remained to meet the new era.

He stood aloof when the Soviet power came to Siberia. Kolchak's rise and fall left him cold....

He stood aloof and watched with hostile curiosity when finally strange people pitched their tents one day on the further bank of the stream, when navvies spat on the palms of their hands, gripped their spades and began to dig up the fields all round about. Over marshes and steppes the surveyors and their assistants commenced operations with measuring apparatus, sight levels and red and white striped laths. Long steel measuring tapes glittered in the sun. That had been the beginning. Then came thousands and yet more thousands. They blasted and blasted so that the countryside round about seemed to be cracking in all its sinews. Liquid oxygen turned mountains into granite quarries. Villages vanished, a vast town arose. But the new workers brought the village into the town. In the fresh building trenches stood green sluggish water, sows wallowed in it. Before countless clay huts women milked their cows in the evenings. The old man saw things he had never seen before—concrete-mixers out of which rocks were cast in forms as iron is cast in moulds; in the winter dredgers burrowed under the ice of the river Tom; women workers wore trousers. Had the people gone mad then?

He knew the old legends of this neighbourhood, he knew every nook and corner in the *taiga* and in the mountains here, he knew of veins of ore in the south. But suddenly everything was turned topsy-turvy. He gazed into the deep abysses of building

trenches. The earth disclosed the secret of its inner colours; under the black mould it was reddish-brown, and deeper down it grew lighter and lighter with white and grey streaks.

The left bank, which he had known for fifty years, began to be a strange place to him. He felt helpless when brought face to face with all the visions of a young world of which he could make nothing.

Nikolai Alexeyevich thrust aside the pestle and mortar. His voice suddenly lost its ring, it sounded like thin boards rasping against each other. He licked his dry lips and combed his beard once or twice with his withered bony fingers. The conversation seemed to be tiring him. But when he heard that we were literary men, he eagerly took out a thick yellowing roll of manuscript from the drawer and began to read aloud to us. It was a long, tedious, venomous, but really harmless invective against Leo Tolstoy, which he had evidently composed about the beginning of the century and in which he several times called Tolstoy "an old porridge cook" and scoffed at him for a false god-seeker and clumsy peasant-catcher. The matter was falsely conceived from beginning to end, the picture of Tolstoy's character hideously distorted. The only thing which was in some measure convincing was the reverse side of this dislike for Tolstoy—namely, a boundless respect and admiration for Chernyshevsky, this greatest and most illustrious figure of those years of struggle for revolutionary peasant democracy.

For politeness' sake we heard him out to the end.

Before we left, he told us how once last year he had plucked up heart and driven over and gone right into the office of the works administration. There in the geological department he had described forty

deposits of red iron ore of which he had heard from time to time from Shorians and other inhabitants of the mountains. They were located in the district to the south of the mines of Telbess and Temir-Tau, where ore is now being mined.

We returned once again to the subject of the Kuznetskstroy.

"Yes," said he, "courage you have. But why this haste? Why this crazy hurry. You are going too fast, much too fast, it seems to me. Nothing lasting can come out of it.... Look at me, I have lived fifty years as though it were a day and every day as though it were half a century...."

"And what has come of it all?" we felt like asking him, and Abchuk stole a glance at me. He guessed the answer I was thinking: "A wretched invective against Tolstoy."

Time has devoured the old man. He has no notion that the socialism, the classless future, hazily dreamed of and dimly envisaged by the revolutionary conspirators of his generation half a century ago—that this future is now beginning to become the real present before his very eyes. Brought about not by scorn of death on the part of bold individuals and not by the spontaneous uprising of small groups. Brought about by the organized mass strength of the working class, which our hero does not know, which is led by the iron Party which our hero cannot grasp. For this Party has become what it is in three revolutions which our hero has slept through. And in it the austere, far-visioned science of Marx and Engels, of Lenin and Stalin, is united with the flaming courage of all true movements for freedom which mankind under the yoke of man has ever attempted.

CHAPTER EIGHT
ORE IN THE TAIGA

*Blast Furnace and Samovar—The Way to the Iron—
Migration of the Peoples—A Glance Backward,
Gmelin Again—Fatma Mirimova—The Story of the
Engineer and the Bear—Lecture on the U.K.K.—
Romantic Interlude—The Beheaded Mountain—
Digression on the Shorians—Bolsheviks
Compel the Earth to be Rich!*

CHAPTER EIGHT

ORE IN THE TAIGA

I

Blast Furnace and Samovar

Every day, before the sun set behind the Hill of the Patriarchs, we made our way in the long shadows of the blast furnace and smoke stacks to Vassya the chauffeur.

Has it been raining again in the mountains. Vassya, have the streams flooded the road? Is the *taiga* still impassable? Let's take the lightest of the machines. . . .

For weeks past the glowing pillar of dust and din has been standing over Kuznetskstroy; and can it be that rain is falling in the valleys of the Ala-tau?

But one morning Vassya took the lightest machine, a one and a half ton Ford with double back wheels, and drove off.

He raced past the Socialist City, sped through the Old Town, the bazaar. Beyond the "Garden City" the highway ended, the splendid turmoil of the building sites was behind us, the pillar of dust and din sank away.

The high banks of the river Tom appeared again for a moment like white stone quarries. And then everything was quiet and strange—Siberian upland.

On the truck, between great cases of tools, two small cans of gasoline, a little motor and a mail bag were stowed away.

Abchuck and I, our bones almost shaken out of us

were sitting now on the cases, now on the cans. To be sure, it would have been more comfortable to sit in front on the leather seat beside Vassya; but the latter had reserved this place of honour for an intimate friend of his whom he wanted to pick up on the way in his native village.

Suddenly he turned the car sharp to the right and sent it burring up a green treeless hill, studded here and there with vegetable gardens, clay cottages and solitary block-houses.

We drew up in one of those settlements whose population is still hovering undecided between village and building site, digging potatoes and building blast furnaces simultaneously. Children crowded around the car. We jumped out. On the steps of a porch stood a family waving and shouting "Vassya". A *samovar* was lighted with due ceremony.

We were condemned to lose a good hour of precious time. And we lost it thanks to the untimely hospitality of small people.

2

The Way to the Iron

When we drove on, a black-bearded giant in black leather jacket, an installator at the ore mines of Telbess, occupied the front seat next to small slender Vassya.

The distance from Kuznetskstroy to Telbess is roughly speaking one hundred kilometres, but what kilometres!

The road has not been made, it has only been driven over. In the soft seasons the road does not exist. In spring, in late autumn, Telbess is cut off

from the rest of the world. Winter provides it with good sleigh tracks, partly over the ice of the rivers Mras-Su and Kondoma.

The half-finished railway track is ploughing forward not far from here through valleys which are still difficult to reach. But it leaves Telbess on the right hand and makes its way fifteen kilometres deeper into the mountains, to the mines of the new area Temir-Tau, whose ore beds are already putting Telbess in the shade. Telbess will have to content itself with a suspension railway to the station of Mandybash, where a plant is being built for the dressing and concentration of the ore masses mined there.

Kuznetskstroy, the metallurgical giant of Siberia, needs ore. With iron arms and claws it is penetrating into the wilderness of the mountains on the Mongolian border. It is burrowing into nameless valleys. Iron finds iron. Now it is prospecting in woody Abakan, now it is digging its talons into the rocky body of Mystag, Ulutag, Koromdu, Kangury.

This summer twenty-five geological exploring and prospecting parties were operating on a field of about fifteen thousand square kilometres of mountain steppe, primeval forest, river flats, moorland, and again *taiga* and mountain steppe. . . . Pioneers of geology, pioneers of socialist industry in struggle with the jungle, the mountains, with snakes and wolves.

Our duty as newspaper correspondents now demanded that we penetrate into this wilderness.

Every now and then the cases shook us off, the gasoline cans danced about, the tortured springs pounded against the axles. Under the double tyres the road twisted and turned in all directions, throw-

ing up a smoky brown cloud of dust which veiled the landscape behind us.

But ahead of us, leaning against the diaphanous wall of the summer sky, rocked the wave-like ridges of a sea of light and shade—the flat mountain tops of the Ala-Tau, the Abakan and in the far background the ranges of the Tuvian Urjanchai.

3

Migration of the Peoples

The *taiga* is the primeval Siberian forest. For long stages the road had been cut through this *taiga*. Trunks of felled cedars, firs, giant pines fringed the way. We startled hares, weasels and foxes, screeching flocks of unknown birds rose up out of the bushes.

The soil was sometimes marshy, often we had to cross brooks. Vassya, however, did not suit the speed of the car to the terrain but only to his personal whim. Shouting above the roar of the motor, he conversed with his companion and let the car rip. He, Vassya, was not terrified by the wrecks of overturned trucks which lined the road like corpses with their upturned tyreless wheels.

Through wooden entrance gates we drove into the long streets of shepherds' villages. At such times our driver took delight in driving bleating herds of sheep before his radiator. Once he drove into a horse-cart and in turning only escaped an accident by a hair's breadth.

All day long we kept overtaking solitary armed riders and long caravans of covered waggons in the forest and the steppe. Under the hoods, patched with skins and bark in the torn places, you could see peasant families huddled together with their

belongings, mothers nursing babies, sleeping children. The men led the horses by the bridle, or rode behind. As our Ford approached from afar with toots of its horn, they sprang like lightning to the horses and covered their eyes, cursing the while. When this did not avail, the animals had to be held by force and calmed down—such was the horror awakened in this remote district by our car, its motor, its siren and its tempo.

These men and their animals had been on the road for many weeks; they came from the far and farthest north, with household goods and belongings—from the heart of Siberia, from the banks of the Middle Ob and Yenissei, from the Narym Territory. Along with the Russians came other peoples too—Ostyaks. Tunguses, Tatars. A migration of the peoples towards the south had begun. Socialist industry which was coming into being needed hundreds and thousands of fresh, strong, vigorous human beings.

And the hearts and hands of these new people, whom the magnetic iron-stone attracts like iron, are bringing the socialist future of Asia towards the metal for which it has been waiting, as it were, for centuries in the depths of the mountains.

Endless rows of covered waggons, grey with dust, resounding whip-cracks, camps of tents and bivouacs in the forest clearings, women in many-coloured dresses with babies at the breast, riders and ox drivers, shying half-wild draught animals who were meeting their successor, the machine, for the first time—a new kind of migration of the peoples such as the history of Asia had never seen before; a migration of the peoples to industry had begun, an army of socialism on the march.

A Glance Backward—Gmelin Again

The Kuzbas is a coal base. It is true that in the original draft of the U.K.K. there is mention of copper, zinc, lead, silver and gold from the mountains and rivers of the Kuznetsk Ala-Tau. Iron ore, however, was to come from the far-off Urals, while Kuznetsk was to supply the far-off Urals with its coal.

But on the edge of the Urals themselves, not far from Solikamsk, lies the Kizel coal basin which yields quite serviceable coal, even though this coal cannot be compared for good and rich qualities with the Prokopyevsk seams whose wonderful anthracites (those from the "Gigant" mine, for example) can be put straight into the blast furnace without coking. On the other hand it has been well known for ages that the Siberian mountain Tatars of the Ala-Tau have been able to smelt and forge iron from times immemorial; in fact the very name "Kuznetsk" indicates a blacksmith's art of long standing. It follows that there must have been iron ore on the edge of the Kuzbas itself.

Between the foothills of the Kuznetsk Ala-Tau the river Tom flows out into the open valley. In its upper course it is a many-channelled mountain stream, foaming and glinting greenish silver. After joining the Mras-Su and the Kondoma, it slackens its course and broadens out between green banks, and little by little its countenance acquires the smoothness and magnificent mien of the big Siberian river. The country up here, along the banks of the Kondoma and the Mras, was inhabited up to the beginning of the seventeenth century by half-

nomad Tatars to whom the Russians later gave the name of "Kuznetsy," or smiths, because they smelted iron ore in small furnaces and forged arrows, knives, kettles, axe-blades, and three-legged and-irons out of iron. In 1617 Cossacks and musketeers arrived from Tomsk, subdued the Tatars and built a wooden fortress with a rampart and palisade on the left bank of the Tom. In 1662 this fortress was set on fire by Chungurs, but it was rebuilt a few years later on a spot nearby, this time on the right bank, almost opposite the confluence of the Aba. And here grew up the town of Kuznetsk, as it was seen and described some years later (September 1734) by Johann Georg Gmelin and as we saw it ourselves a short time ago, only a little changed since those times.

It appears that the busy and inquisitive German professor also undertook the excursion into the valley of the Kondoma just two hundred years before us. This is what he writes about it in his diary under the date September 19, 1734:

The Day following the Nineteenth we commenced a new Journey. We had heard that many of the *Tatars* living on the Rivers *Kondoma* and *Mrass* were able to smelt Iron out of Ore. . . . We therefore were desirous to see their smelting Furnaces, the more so because we have been told that we would not have to travel any great Distance. . . . We rode along the *Kondoma*, on whose Bank we found the Village of *Gadeva*. To this Place we rode all the time towards the South and a little towards the South-West, and had to cross diverse Morasses, through which one cannot venture in a Cart. Our first Desire was to see the

Iron Works. But though we searched all around, we could not find any Building different from the others....

At last they took us into a *Yurta*, in whose Entrance we at once observed the smelting Furnace. We could also see at once that it was not necessary to build a special *Yurta* for the smelting Furnace, but that any *Yurta* is convenient for this purpose. Nay more, it did not prevent the People from living in this same *Yurta*, all of which is a great Advantage over the European Iron Works which have to be erected at great Cost. The Furnace stands on the Place which is generally used for Cooking, and the Earth is hollowed out somewhat there. This Cavity, which is found in all Tatar *Yurtas* on account of the cooking, forms a Part of the smelting Furnace. A Lid of Clay, which is as broad underneath as the breadth of the Cavity, viz., about half a Foot in Diameter, and which narrows at the Top where it is not more than an Inch and a Half across. and about a Foot high, forms, together with the Cavity, the whole of the smelting Furnace. In the Front is a Hole, which, however, is bricked up during the Smelting, and on the Side is another Hole, against which two Bellows are directed. Two Tatars perform the whole Work; one bears Coals and Ore in turn into the Furnace, but in such a way that he puts not more than a shovelful on one Layer of Ore, and the Ore must be broken up small. In this manner he fills the Furnace full, and the other Fellow blows with the two Bellows continually. As soon as the Coal have somewhat set, Ore and Coals are again brought in, and so they continue until

about three Pounds of Ore has been put in. They cannot smelt more at one time; therefore the Smelter, after he has blown with the Bellows for a little time more, takes out the Stone in the Wall with a Pair of Tongs. The Lumps of Metal are lying in the Cavity in the Earth; he hunts them out from under the Coals, and cleanses them from the Coals adhering to them by Knocks with a Piece of Wood. From three Pounds of Ore they obtain about two Pounds of Iron, which indeed looks somewhat unclean but nevertheless seems to be very good. In an hour and a half we had seen everything....

Their Ore, which lies on the Surface near the River *Kondoma*, 40 Versts upstream, where the Brook *Mandobash* falls into it, is dug partly with the aforementioned Tool (an Iron Plough-share), which to be sure they use for the most Part only to remove the Turf where it lies over the Ore, partly with another Tool which is formed like an Axe. With this Tool they do also split Wood, and employ the same for many other Uses.... During the smelting we sent for their *Kam* (Priest) to perform some Sorcery before us. He made them bring him his magic Drum...."

Then follows a pedantically exact description of the *shaman* dance, full of that same minuteness of the German Professor to which we owe the above valuable contribution to the history of culture—his picture of primitive Tatar metallurgy. The tsarist empire had sent out its learned German explorer. The explorer handed in his report punctually. But the report remained unused, the riches he had discovered remained unexploited. For in the hands of

the tsarist empire Siberia had to remain one vast penal colony, and even the land of the smiths was a place of exile. . . . The smiths had to forge chains. Chains were the symbol of the tsarist empire.

And before taking our last leave of Gmelin, let us take special note of this manifestation of his economic wisdom, this magnificent rationalization proposal of a reactionary: Why build blast furnaces in which one can neither live nor cook one's food! Why be so mad as to invest giant sums in useless buildings! Presumptuous Europe, contemplate the practical ways of the humble Asiatic! The meanest hut affords space for a whole iron works. . . .

5

Fatma Mirimova

At midday we had had a breakdown. We had remained for two hours in Mikhailovka, a sort of post station in mid-road.

We had been entertained with sunflower seeds, milk and tea. It was like changing horses a hundred years ago. At last the motor started again.

The car stood between gardens full of beehives, pumpkins and sunflowers. Under the car lay Vassya and the installator by turns, working and cursing assiduously.

Comrade Abchuk went for a stroll around the settlement, and I joined him. We passed by gardens, wattled pens and pastures. Below, down by the river, well-kept herds of cattle were grazing. They were of good Volga stock, their ancestors might have grazed on the lush meadows of the Yaroslavl *gubernia*.

Absorbed in our thoughts and conversation, we

drew near to the corn fields, where the harvest work was still proceeding—at least a month later than in European Russia. A figure on horseback appeared from behind a line of women binding sheaves, came galloping towards us and—a woman greeted us from the saddle. She wore the pointed, gaily embroidered Tatar cap over her fluttering locks of black hair; her angular face was Mongolian in shape, but her eyes were large and wide open. A little boy was snuggled up close to her in the saddle. She addressed us in drawling Russian, such as the Ukrainians speak. Were we engineers? Had we come from Moscow?

“You say you left the building site this morning?”

She spoke of Kuznetskstroy as of some very distant and marvellous thing.

“Oh, I have friends there, good comrades—Nukhin, Grachev, Teofilov. . . . Don’t you know Teofilov? He is directing the installation on the construction of the rolling mill. . . .”

“The rolling mill, dear comrade, has been finished and is working already.”

“Oh, excuse me, I ought to have known that. . . . I haven’t been there since the winter. A long time. How everything there must have changed! You see, comrade, we have our collective farm—it was a year old in February—it keeps you busy day and night. Now there is our harvest campaign, and only 88 per cent of the plan fulfilled. If only the tractors were here—but this year they are sure to come late, and then it will rain and I’m afraid they’ll get stuck on the way. . . . The building site, you know—you can see it from over yonder, someone told me. If you ride across the river and up that mountain slope and then climb a tall pine tree there, they say

you can see the smoke-stacks and blast furnaces—I don't know if it's true."

She catches sight of the edge of a newspaper which was protruding out of Abchuk's coat pocket. And suddenly, almost imploringly, she says: "Have you fresh newspapers?"

Friend Abchuk pulls out an *Izvestia* which was "only" thirteen days old.

Passing the reins to her little son, she springs from the saddle, squats down on the ground and spreads out the paper before her like a precious carpet. For several minutes she forgets all about us.

When she turns to us again it is with an almost guilty smile on her face: "You are surprised.... Newspapers from the centre are very very rare guests with us."

Fatma Mirimova is the widow of a Red Army man who fell fighting against Kolchak. She is chairman of the collective farm and a member of the district soviet.

"Oh, yes," she says, "the soil is good, we don't suffer from hunger."

She tells us that the valley is of fertile alluvial soil, and for Siberian conditions you could even call this stretch of country fruitful; there was barley, oats, flax, milch cows. Every farm had a cow and a calf. Despite primitive methods of work the plan was being fulfilled. They had no difficulty in making two ends meet.... If only—how should she say it?—if only it wasn't so frightening in the woods....

"Perhaps, you'll think I'm cowardly, a woman like me...."

No, she does not look exactly cowardly. What

she means is the loneliness of a little collective farm in the *taiga*, cut off, so to speak, from the great protecting arm of the main body. She means the difficulty of an outpost struggle without adequate cultural weapons.

"Often we are cut off from the district centre for weeks, weeks on end. That's the most terrible thing—no people, no letters, nothing."

"Still you have this." And I pointed questioningly to the wooden radio-mast.

But she shook her head: "On good days, and that's very seldom, we can just about hear Novosibirsk. Otherwise, nothing but screeches and moans. They say it is the iron in the earth. . . ."

We understood her troubles.

All round about are the old, calm, well-to-do farmsteads of the pumpkin growers and bee-farmers, the rich individual peasants. These farms are still inhabited by the heretics of old, the "dissenters," still more alien and hostile to the present than to the bitter past. The rich descendants of persecuted heretics, exiled long ago to Siberia. The Communist Fatma Mirimova has a hard struggle against kulak sectarians, a hard struggle to win the confidence of the former farm hands in the collective farm.

And when the spring, when the autumn with its pouring rain makes the *taiga* impenetrable, when for long weeks neither guest nor mail is to be seen, when the kulak houses become prayer rooms, when the doubters and questioners conspire, and open class war looms up like a thunderstorm—then sometimes it would be good as a weapon, a salvation, to have a newspaper from the centre, even though it were thirteen days old.

Vassya's horn was tooting impatiently. We hurried back to our car....

Near the village of Jale the cultivated fields came to an end. We rolled over a wooden bridge over the Kondoma.

At the bridgehead stood the barracks, barns and workshops of the building workers' brigade who were blasting rocks and moving mountains on the high bank in order to complete the railway track to Mandybash.

We drove under a completed stone viaduct and soon plunged again into the shadow of the forest, whose foliage retained the rain drops in its green meshes.

Above our heads was a sound like the rushing of a hundred waterfalls.

The mountain wind was rising.

6

The Story of the Engineer and the Bear

The brakes screamed, the car rushed down a slope in a cloud of dust. Between charred trunks of trees we caught a glimpse of a narrow gorge, and down below a group of houses looking like Swiss *chalets*, with broad roofs and many smoking chimneys.

The *taiga* roundabout had been stripped bare by terrible forest fires, the twilight gave the black gaping tree trunks a ghostly corpse-like appearance, painted the silhouette of an uncanny death dance on the streaming blanket of mist. Noiselessly but visibly the earth was breathing forth its vapours.

Telbess received us. It was like an island port. The islanders welcomed us, we were bringing them mail, machinery and gasoline. We were bringing with us also the opportunity of a ride in a one and a

half ton truck, which tomorrow, given dry weather, would drive back to the building site of Kuznetskstroy.

The main square, a former Alpine meadow at a sharp angle, was fringed with solid block-houses, which when seen from close had nothing Swiss about them, but rather reminded one of the strong wooden houses of the far north, such as I have seen in the Khibiny mountains of Karelia, and in Murmansk; the same heavy substructure of stone wall, inside the same broad stoves with water boilers built into them, and the same clean refreshing smell of resinous pinewood.

Everything was young and new, much of it still in the rough. In the middle of the square, crowned with aërials, stood the little house of the Telbess radio.

And yet—everything was like the winter camp of a mountain army, everything was temporary, provisional, hastily run up for a short space of time, to be cleared away immediately when its aim was fulfilled.

Rows of barracks climbed the mountainside in terraces. Higher up lay quarries, grubbed slopes and cutting platforms, and finally the dark mouth of the main gallery.

After we have given Vassya to understand in our parting words that we prefer the devil's grandmother to him as a chauffeur, we wish him good luck and follow the mining technician in his black leather coat into the mines office. Meanwhile, it has grown quite dark, and all at once, as if at a signal, dim electric bulbs are lighted all round.

In the long book-keeper's office a meeting is just beginning. The ledgers have been closed, they lie

about on tables and window sills, and on the ledgers bearded wood-cutters are sitting in padded jerkins and bast shoes. The air is corroded with *makhorka*. Talk, shouts and laughter mingle into an indistinguishable din, as hard to unravel as a tangle of damp fishing nets.

In the Red Corner we found the First Mining Engineer Yanentz. Like a yew tree among creeping undergrowth his powerful form towered up from among a throng of excited children.

The giant Yanentz is the "patron" of the Young Pioneers; he has taken all the children of Telbess workers under his patronage, and in his spare time he is their best loved teacher, playmate and teller of stories. He knows the depths of a child's heart as he knows the inside of his ore mountains. Engineer Yanentz is a happy man. He has not mistaken either of his professions.

"And as I went further into the wood," he continues his story, "picking raspberries, raspberries all the time, there I saw suddenly a big brown bear behind the bushes, snuffing and picking raspberries. Look here, Mr. Bruin, I thought to myself, have I got to pick raspberries from your bush? There are enough raspberries in the forest for both of us. And so I crept away on tiptoe. The wiser one gives in, say the weak."

The children cheered with delight, but they were really disappointed; many of them would rather have heard about a fight and about some bold huntsman's deed. Why didn't uncle Yanentz laugh with the rest?

They did not guess that his adventure was not a fictitious one.

7

Lecture on the U.K.K.

We sat face to face with Comrade Morshin. The window behind his back stood open, out of the black impenetrable depths came the rushing sound of the Telbess stream. Mosquitoes zipped around the dim shadeless lamp.

Grigory Mikhailovich Morshin is a hero of labour, and an old tried and trusted soldier of the revolution. A Siberian from the Kuznetsk basin, miner from the Ansherka coal fields. A miner in the third generation (quite a rare case in these parts!). A son of the proletariat trebly true to the grain, a revolutionary by birth, so to speak.

He fought through the Civil War in Siberia from beginning to end, and today he knows every one of the guerilla fighters left living from Omsk to Tomsk. After completing his studies at the Communist University in Sverdlovsk, he was active for several years as a Party functionary in the regional centre, then his natural bent conquered—his deep personal love for his native mines—and he came home to the Kuzbas.

Comrade Morshin is mines manager of Telbess and Temir-Tau. His working day almost scorns the limits of natural exhaustion. After spending all day in the mines, he can generally be found in the office of an evening or late at night. Today, after more than twelve hours' tense work, he finds time to instruct us extensively about the new prospects of the Urals-Kuznetsk Combine.

"The problem of the U.K.K.," says he, "will find its solution as its two poles become more and more independent of one another; The original idea of

the mutual exchange of Urals ore and Kuzbas coal must not be understood schematically. Very simple, it would seem: the same freight cars which take our coal to Magnitogorsk bring back Magnitogorsk ore to Kuznetsk on the return journey. Very good. Only people tend to overlook two trifles. Firstly, that this transport back and forth has to overcome a distance of two thousand kilometres. Secondly, that from the point of view of the iron working process the loading space of the necessary quantity of coal is always two or three times as great as that of the necessary quantity of ore. And further, all this has to go on over a distance which equals that between Moscow and Paris and where the line is constantly being snowed up in winter time. No, comrades, the right solution lies elsewhere. Urals ore needs coal from the Urals or from Karaganda. And Siberian coal must be provided with Siberian ore! We must and will find ore in the Kuzbas, much more than we have at present! There is iron in Siberia. Nature gives to socialism what it withheld from capitalism. We Bolsheviks can compel the earth to be rich."

He had got up in his excitement and gone over to the geological map hanging on the wall.

"What is Telbess with its one and a half million tons today? If we succeed in adopting the mining methods of the American McDonald to our conditions here, our mountain will be exhausted within two years. Telbess is going under, but it will not be forgotten. Telbess was the reconnoitrer, the skirmisher, the historical outpost. Three years ago there were three huts standing here; but in them the best men of the Kuzbas were preparing for the attack. Now we have advanced as far as Temir-Tau.

Its ore beds are twelve times richer. But we are boring and looking further afield. In five years' time we must be in a position to satisfy the blast furnaces of our Kuznetsk works with Kuznetsk ore. That is our program."

His bony miner's face with its high forehead glowed with enthusiasm.

"Yes, but won't this competition between the two poles, this endeavour to make them independent of one another, destroy the organism of the U.K.K.?" put in Abchuk. Morshin smiled.

"Magnitogorsk is helping us. And we are helping it. We help each other with experience, with technique, with men. For our competition is a socialist one. We are two chips of the same block. The U.K.K. is alive and will go on living!"

He let us out on to the now silent square, over which the moon was casting the shadow of the radio mast.

"I'll see that they give you horses tomorrow. Good luck on your journey!"

And with swift steps he went back into the deserted office, to his work.

8

Romantic Interlude

How strange was this summer night in the Ala-Tau—with its songs of rare birds, its copper full moon hanging on the rim of the mountain and striking cold fire from the cascades!

The singing of the circular saw had died to rest, only the twenty horse-power engine was pounding in the power station, and the dim light in Comrade Morshin's window twinkled on all alone.

The little place had gone to sleep. But the mine was as sleepless as its manager. Up and down the mountain side the tip-cars rolled on their cables. Workers came out of the main gallery at the end of the shift. Several groups of men climbed down into the gorge to wash the ore dust from their bodies. They bathed, laughed, made their voices echo between the masses of rock; they sang the old immemorial songs of Siberia, the melancholy, the dauntless songs of exile.

On the Main Square stood the militiaman. He was not content with showing us the dining room; he took us in, showed us to our places, ordered herring and cabbage soup for us, and did not hurry back to his post until he had seen for himself that we were seated and eating our meal.

We slept in a lodging for passing travellers, on clean mattresses stuffed with fine shavings. In the next room, behind a thin plank partition, a couple of technicians sent to work here were conversing. They had drunk tea and were yawning and playing cards. Suddenly some one chanced to mention the name of engineer MacDonald. They brightened up at once. It seemed to have the effect of a challenge. They plunged into a heated discussion on American and German methods of mining, and were at once split into two irreconcilable camps. The interesting argument did not prevent us from dropping off into a sound sleep, and since we woke up later than arranged, the driver was already standing reproachfully at our bedside with his shorthanded whip in his hand.

In a little low basket-carriage to which two grey horses were harnessed, we continued our journey. A bumpy road wound its way steeply upward be-

tween rocks and bushes. Grass, parsley weed, hemlock and fox-gloves grew shoulder high. Higher up, in the forest, every stone, every tree trunk was shaggy with moss and creepers.

No sign of human beings or dwellings along the way.

The coachman beguiled our time with stories of robbery, murder and banditry in the *taiga*, and he was terror-stricken himself when, after two hours' driving, a couple of men emerged from between the trees, who turned out to be Tungus charcoal-burners. They asked for cigarettes and told us we were near our journey's end. The wind brought a smell as of wood fires and roasting mutton.

"Before the gates of Temir-Tau," Abchuk declaimed.

His jest turned into a prophecy. For after a bend in the road we indeed passed a high wooden gateway with the red flag waving over it. In the watchhouse of the mines management a fresh wall-newspaper had been put up, showing the achievements of the shock brigades. We read the first headline: "Iron and steel—the backbone of reconstruction!"

9

The Beheaded Mountain

Temir-Tau, future terminus of the Kuzbas railway, was for the time being obliged to rely on its splendid stable of horses, supplied with about three hundred carts and coaches. The few tractors that it had were needed for lumber work.

Along the wheel-track by which we had come, leading through bush and forest, now a sunken way, now a bridle path, impassable for motor traffic, the

little Siberian horses had to haul everything—men, food, tools, machines.

In the long weeks when the autumn rains obliterated the roads, when supplies of food at Telbess were shrinking alarmingly, Temir-Tau was like the isolated outwork of a besieged fortress.

The first borings had been made here in 1927. Underground work was begun in 1930. First the main gallery, 450 metres long, was driven through the mountain; then the mountain itself was decapitated, made into a headless cone; then the open work was begun on the terraces, and finally one vertical and one slanting shaft were sunk.

During an interval in the blasting operations we made our way into the cool traverse galleries which connect up the three faces with one another. Here the walls were being timbered and secured. In the hollow perspective of the main gallery the curving flight of electric lamps trailed away into nothing. Water dripped and trickled from the walls. We climbed up the 80-metre ladder in the neighbouring shaft.

As we emerged into the daylight, we found ourselves on the open work terrace among a brigade of workers 50 or 60 strong who were shovelling the earth onto the moving conveyor of the transporter. Roundabout gaped prospecting holes, the traces of countless test borings.

"A hundred thousand tons of different sorts of alluvial earth have to be removed from the ore veins," explained brigadier Grishin, an athletic miner from the Donbas who had studied for a year in the Mining Institute at Dniepropetrovsk.

"Unfortunately, we haven't been able to get an excavator here yet."

"Sure, there's a lot of things we're wanting," he added, and led us to the lifting shaft. The cage was worked by a primitive horse capstan; two horses, watched over by a driver, kept circling around the axle-tree which worked the elevator. When they went to the right, the cage was drawn up; when they went leftward, it was lowered.

"This way we'll soon catch up with the Middle Ages," laughed Grishin. "You have to do what you can. However, the first freight train that steams into the Temir-Tau will bring us everything mentioned on the application form—new compressors, pneumatic hammers, dynamos, electric engines. That's what they promised us. . . . Then we're feeling the need of building materials very badly—rails, for example." And he pointed to the ramified network of the pit railway with its roughly timbered wooden track.

Grishin was dissatisfied with the industrial management of the Kuzbas. He was of the opinion that mines ought not to be subject to the control of men whose speciality was metallurgy. "They're all too much set on the Urals and regard all expenses for *us* as sacrifices."

"But we're already repaying the sacrifices," said he, and picked up a piece of iron-stone. He broke it in two and handed us the two halves.

The mineral weighed heavy in the palm of your hand; it had a purple and yellowish tint, but the fresh surface where it had been broken had a black-grained crystal shimmer with faint patches of rust. Iron ore—core of the new age, stone of technique! Primary substance of the locomotive, the dynamo, the tractor, the ship's skeleton, of the web of rails that girdles the earth. Iron ore—root of the Eiffel

Tower, of the Hudson Bridge. Iron-stone, it seems to me, is a contradiction in terms, for *iron* has freed our building from *stone*....

Brigadier Grishin continues: "In quality we can rival the Magnet Mountain of the Urals. In the western beds we are getting lumps with an iron content of 55 per cent, and the deeper we bore, the richer the ore becomes; we've already obtained specimens with from 65 to 68 per cent content.... It's only machinery we're lacking. No, men too. We need three thousand here on the spot, and all we have is a bare eighteen hundred workers. Besides which they're all peasants—not one miner among them. Almost half of them came to us from the Soltonsk Collective Farm. It's not enough. But then, if the influx increases, there's a lack of food supplies at once.... Only the railway can rescue us from this situation. We are counting the days...."

We ask him about the Shorians, the aborigines of this mountain country. Didn't they want to become miners?

Thereupon Grishin told us a long story.

10

Digression on the Shorians

In Temir-Tau we saw bears kept as domestic animals. The Shorians tame bears and sell them. In Temir-Tau we saw carts going by like sleighs with a jingle of bells. The Shorians hang bells on their horses to scare away the evil spirits from the road.

The Shorians, slit-eyed, small and a little bandy-legged, come to Temir-Tau to the co-operative fur collection station, and in the "Integral Co-operative"

they buy all the necessities of life, including soap, and even lipstick (for the men), but above all cartridges.

They have remained a race of hunters; they follow the game wherever it moves, going deeper and deeper into the mountains. Like the game, they withdrew before the onmarch of industry. They have evacuated two villages by which the new railway is to pass. Why? "We don't like the noise." Nevertheless they conclude agreements with the "Integral Co-operative," even obtain goods on credit and fulfill their deliveries punctually according to agreement.

But all attempts to draw the Shorians into industry have hitherto come to grief. "We are accustomed to live in the open. We have guns, dogs, horses and daggers. We do better that way." They are wrong; they do worse that way. For apart from hares, whose fur turns white in winter, weasels, wolves, birds of prey, martens, there is not much to be obtained in the mountains of Shoria. To be sure, you can still live by bear hunting. The mountain stags have become rare—in autumn they shed their giant antlers and grow a new soft downy pair in spring which grow extremely rapidly and whose marrow is reckoned a precious physic.

From autumn to January the men are out hunting. Then, in the spring, comes the second hunting season. They stuff their felt boots with a sort of dried sedge and they wear fur clothes or jerkins which they weave themselves out of hemp. They use primitive guns with a pronged fork as a rest. They disdain modern hunting guns because the process of cleaning and oiling them is too troublesome. On the other hand, they can handle a bow and arrow

with great skill. They like to use a sort of bolt, an arrow with a blunted end. They also dig pitfalls and set wooden traps for the game. In winter time they strap broad short boards to the soles of their feet—rough skis, with smooth strips of fur sewn onto them to prevent them slipping down when climbing uphill.

The Shorians are a Mongolian mountain people closely related to the Buryats, and their sister tribes are to be met with far into the uplands of Manchuria. Here, in these mountains, there are about 25,000 of them—many more than before the revolution. In the sphere of the Soviet power “dying” peoples experience the “miracle” of their resurrection.

They live in *yurtas*, they are now taking to bee-farming, they have old legends which they recite in monotonous tones to the sound of a one-stringed guitar. They wear amulets of animals' bones, still preserve the cult of the *shamans*, know all the ecstasies of the drum dance. Formerly they were exploited by fur speculators with colonial ruthlessness and made drunk with brandy. Now they elect their village soviets and unite in hunting artels. They sent a couple of their boys to school in Novosibirsk; they were to have come home again as teachers but they refused to return to the mountains at any price. This breach of discipline, however, has not arrested the cultural development of Shoria. There are Shorian travelling schools and *yurta* clubs. A Shorian film is to be made this year. In regard to landscape the conditions for this are truly magnificent. The high woody upland of mountainous Shoria is considered a rare beauty spot with its Asiatic aspen trees and limes.

Comrade Grishin, to whom we owe the greater part of this knowledge and the acquaintance of one or two Russian-speaking Shorians, invited us for a ride in the Shorian mountains. But, much as we would have liked it, we had to refuse. We had other plans.

II

Bolsheviks Compel the Earth to Be Rich

The two prospecting parties of Engineer Yakovlev, starting from the fork of the river valley, followed two steep and winding gorges, whose water left a deposit of red iron rust on the flint.

We rode over loose stones, heading upwards to join the eastern group.

Ahead of us rode the young geologist Paulson, who knew the way. For half a day we had been able to admire his skill as a rider, as we threaded our way forward along the river bank—between towering cedars, between Siberian pines, aspens, lime trees, over decaying tree-trunks, fallen this way and that, covered with a rank growth of grass, bracken, bushes and undergrowth of a hundred sorts, except where these were choked by creepers.

Our geologist, amazingly adept in the art of mounted path-finding, held the reins in his sinewy hand like a divining rod.

To the south and south-east of Temir-Tau, in the uninhabited valleys of the Abakan, up to the foot of the mountain ranges which form the frontier of the Tannu-Tuva Republic—scattered about in this boundless wilderness, twenty-five prospecting parties were living, struggling and working in the search for rich ore-beds which might be used for the socialist iron works of Kuznetsk.

They began by finding the most beautiful cedar nuts and the most luxuriant raspberries in the world. But they also encountered adders and wolves, mosquitoes and white ants, coupled with shortage of provisions, sudden torrents of rain and freshets.

In the previous year fifteen reconnoitring groups had made "excursions" here and systematically searched the region for outward signs of iron—red-short stone, sediment in the streams, etc. Their



observations on the map were made the basis of this year's plan of operations, which mainly consisted of magnetometric measurements.

To begin with, whole stretches of woodland had first to be cleared of timber before the magnetometre could commence work. The places which gave best results were subjected to more precise measurements, and according to the result of these measurements the points were chosen for the third and last stage of the search—the test boring. The boring was carried to a depth of 300 to 500 metres, because the upper strata of the deposit, washed by rain and water, did not give an idea of whether the ore could be used or not. The finds made during this summer pointed to the presence of considerable ore-beds which, however, were distributed over too extensive an area. As Paulson expressed it, in somewhat legal language, the situation was not profitable for industrial exploitation.

The afternoon sun was scorching. We had climbed up on to a rocky plateau, and could now see down below by the stream the two yellow tents of the eastern group, the horses cropping the grass, and to one side, around a table strewn with measuring instruments, six men bent over a map.

Paulson let forth a sort of yodel.

All six raised their heads as one man. Two of them were on their guard in an instant, one even gripped at his revolver holster.

The man down there, who must have been Yakovlev, burst into a shout of laughter and waved a sheet of paper in greeting to us. I recognized Yakovlev at once—he was just as Paulson had described him. Uncommonly lean and long-legged, wearing a khaki uniform, his silvery beard stream-

ing in the wind, and as we rode up we could see his eyes like those of a boy twinkling from behind the scholar's spectacles.

"Turn back, Paulson," he shouted. "Gallop off to headquarters and tell Frankfurt that we've just found the key to the mountain of Sesame!"

"Jan Danilovich," he continued in more serious tones, "read this urgent message which Comrade Gatov has brought us from the western group and which we, as the nearest relaying station, must transmit to Temir-Tau."

As we sprang from the saddle and were introduced by Paulson, we had no idea what news was awaiting us.

The urgent message was a collective report from the nine most important reconnoitring parties, who kept in touch with each other by a continual chain of messages to and fro. It brought the first news of new deposits which put all previous achievements into the shade. Of sure finds, which could be used for industry, on the mountain of Taigashir, on the rivers Maly Taz, Kochura, Verashalym, Tainse. Beside the signature of other group leaders was that of engineer Noskov, who had command of all the parties combined.

Yakovlev added the report of his group to the others and reckoned up the total sum of all the estimate figures. The result was about 150,000,000 tons of magnetic iron-stone in pretty concentrated deposits.

"Why, that's equal to half the Magnet Mountain of Magnitogorsk!" cried Abchuk.

"The first half—and not the last," rejoined Yakovlev.

"Hm, yes," said Paulson significantly, "Siberia is

a magnitude which has more than its two halves, in a certain sense...."

And he bent over the map.

The messenger, who had to take the message on further, saddled his horse. He took a spare mount with him to bring provisions from Temir-Tau.

Abchuk and I were both struck by the same idea at the same moment—to ride after the messenger, to catch him up, to get to Telbess before him, to hurry on to Jale, to the nearest telegraph, to get a scoop over everybody—even comrades Frankfurt and Borodin, the chiefs of the construction of Kuznetskstroy—to wire, to radio, to send the *first* news of the revolutionizing finds to the *Izvestia* (the paper for which we were travelling)....

But the next moment we burst out laughing.

We were reacting like American reporters out for scoops and sensations. No, that was not our job.

And before it grew dark, we climbed the slope, sat down on a terrace of rock, from where we could see the distant peaks of the Altai flame up once again in the slanting rays of the setting sun, while their foot was already veiled in the evening mist. There we rolled up our sleeves and, each in his own language, each in his own style, began to write our reports with calm and satisfaction.

And strange as it may seem, both of us, as if by mutual agreement, took the words of Comrade Morshin as heading:

"Bolsheviks compel the earth to be rich!"

